

Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Meeting

Microsoft Teams
Tuesday, April 23, 2024
9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

PRCC Representatives and Alternatives

Curt Dotson, Tom Dresser (Alt), GPUD
 Kirk Truscott, Casey Baldwin (Alt), CTCR
 Tom Lorz, CTUIR
 Scott Carlon, Justin Yeager (Alt), NMFS
 Bill Gale, USFWS

Chad Jackson, Andrew Murdoch (Alt) WDFW
 Keely Murdoch, Brandon Rogers (Alt), YN
 Bryan Nordlund, Facilitator
 Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA, Technical Support

Meeting Attendees

Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA, Technical Support and Interim Facilitator
 Curt Dotson, GPUD
 Rod O'Connor GPUD
 Tim Taylor, GPUD
 Kirk Truscott, CTCR

Scott Carlon, NMFS
 Bill Gale, USFWS
 Chad Jackson, WDFW
 Andrew Murdoch, WDFW
 Keely Murdoch, YN

Action Items

- C. Dotson will inform the PRCC of any updates to the 2025–2027 Smolt Survival Study data plan, should they arise. (*This item is ongoing*).

Review Items

- The updated draft 2024 Sub-yearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Agenda (v.4) was forwarded to the PRCC following the meeting on April 10, 2024.

Decisions and Approvals

- None.

I. Welcome, Announcements, Agenda Review, and Meeting Minutes Approval

L. Rohrbach served as interim facilitator for the meeting while B. Nordlund is on leave.

L. Rohrbach welcomed the PRCC and reviewed the agenda. L. Rohrbach added a topic to consider whether a PRCC Policy Committee meeting should be convened in 2024. No other changes to the agenda were made, and the agenda was approved by all parties in attendance.

The draft minutes from the March 26, 2024, meeting were approved without revisions by members who attended that meeting. S. Carlon, B. Gale, and K. Murdoch did not attend the March 26 meeting and abstained from approving the minutes.

II. Sub-yearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Planning

A workshop to update Mid-Columbia parties on knowledge about sub-yearling Chinook Salmon life-history and passage through the Columbia River hydro projects will be held on June 11, 2024, at the Douglas PUD auditorium. Lunch will be provided on site for attendees. An option for virtual attendance will be provided.

L. Rohrbach provided an update on the plan for recording progress and outcomes. Kristi Geris (Habitat Conservation Plan [HCP] Coordinating Committee technical support) will take notes and produce a meeting summary, to be reviewed by representatives for the three PUDs after the meeting. This summary will be provided to both the HCP Coordinating Committee and the PRCC as the basis for furthering discussions and decision-making within those committees.

Attendance will be limited to HCP and Priest Rapids Settlement Agreement signatory parties and presenters. L. Rohrbach will confirm how many staff in addition to committee representatives and alternates may be able to attend in person or virtually. PRCC representatives informed L. Rohrbach about their plans for attendance or for their staff, and L. Rohrbach passed that list on to workshop organizers.

III. 2024 Fish Passage Operations Report

A. Fish Ladder Inspections

No fish ladder inspections have taken place yet; they will begin this week. K. Murdoch will inspect the fish ladders with Mike Clement (Grant PUD) at Wanapum (WAN) and Priest Rapids (PRD) dams this Friday (April 26).

K. Murdoch said the inspections should be done once per month from April through October. Ladders are closed at the end of November through the winter for maintenance. During the ladder maintenance period, one ladder at each dam is always in operation as required in Grant PUD's Bull Trout biological opinion (BiOp). Electronic monitoring was initiated during COVID to substitute for some in-person inspections; Mike Clement sends data sheets electronically from the ladders. Since that time, a hybrid electronic/in-person approach has been carried forward based on staff schedules, attempting to visit the sites in person approximately every other month. There has been no other specific guidance from Fish Passage Center on how frequently to inspect ladders in person.

B. Fish-Spill Updates

C. Dotson provided an update on the initiation of fish spill for 2024.

Both PRCC hydro projects (WAN and PRD) are now operating in fish-spill mode. When projects go into the fish-spill season, turbine operations also go into fish mode. WAN and PRD went into fish-spill mode on April 4 and April 5, respectively. A decision was made by Grant PUD to initiate spill about 10 days to 2 weeks earlier than is typical, due to increasing numbers of fish observed moving downstream following an early release of summer Chinook Salmon yearlings from Dryden Pond.

C. Dotson said he made that decision prior to identifying volunteers from the PRCC for a spill committee who usually coordinate around that decision; however, this was a more conservative decision to protect fish.

B. Gale and S. Carlon have volunteered to serve on the spill committee for 2024.

C. Adult Fish Counts for 2024 (April 15 to November 15)

Fish counts at WAN and PRD started on April 15. As of April 22, approximately 28 Chinook Salmon and 18 steelhead had passed over PRD.

C. Dotson said Grant PUD is employing the same protocols for fish counting as last year. He said there may be some adjustments based on what was learned last year, but Grant PUD will continue to support approaches that substantially improved the accuracy of counts in 2023.

UPDATES

IV. Review of Outstanding No Net Impact-Funded Projects

- **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II**
- **Northern Pike Removal (2022 to 2024)**
- **WDFW PIT-Tag Detection Barge**

A. Murdoch said the Wenatchee passive integrated transponder (PIT)-tag detection barge is performing well, with approximately 1,600 detections on one of the hatchery release dates.

- **2024 Quincy Northern Pikeminnow Derby**
- **2024 Real Time Research Avian Predation Study**

C. Dotson met with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation staff (BOR) regarding their ongoing work and provided an update.

BOR has flown over the Goose Island tern colony in Potholes Reservoir for high-resolution mapping to better characterize the topography, specifically slope, of the island to inform dissuasion efforts. They are mapping detailed elevations, slope, and topography overlain with known historical Caspian tern nesting areas. The objective is to evaluate how steep certain slopes are to estimate potential nesting success and plan habitat modification projects to reduce the number of terns on Goose Island. Goose Island was identified by the Action Agencies (BOR, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Bonneville Power Administration) in the 2014 *Inland Avian Predation Management Plan*

as an avian predator hot spot on the Columbia Plateau based on rate of predation and number of birds observed, and a need to manage that colony was identified.

The annual PIT-tag “seeding” over tern nesting areas to test for PIT-tag detection efficiency post-nesting season has been done.

Grant PUD meets with BOR on a monthly basis for updates on sightings. There has been weekly communication between the U.S. Department of Agriculture staff working for BOR and Real Time Research. Personnel changes at BOR among field staff have improved the coordination; staff have taken a major interest in their responsibilities under the BiOp that is in place.

(Note: a weekly update from the RTR and BOR teams was emailed to the PRCC following the meeting).

V. Subcommittee Updates

L. Rohrbach will continue to forward subcommittee notes and materials to PRCC members and alternates.

- Priest Rapids Fish Forum—did not meet in April, next meeting May 1.
- Habitat Subcommittee—met April 11, next meeting May 9.
- Fall Chinook Work Group—met October 3, next meeting May 7.
- Hatchery Subcommittee—met April 17 (joint business) and 18 (White River hatchery program), next meeting May 15.

VI. SOAs Discussed in 2024

SOA number	Key Words	Last Discussed	Status
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-- = none to date

VII. Policy Committee Meeting

L. Rohrbach said it is time to start discussing whether to hold a PRCC Policy Committee meeting in 2024. Last year the PRCC Policy Committee tentatively agreed to hold a meeting around the same time each year, approximately July 20.

L. Rohrbach asked for representatives’ perspectives on holding a Policy Committee meeting in 2024.

C. Dotson said Grant PUD is in favor of meeting once annually to keep relationships and communication open so that when an issue rises to the Policy Committee, the channels are open. Before last year’s meeting, years had gone by since they had convened with a lot of turnover in representatives.

B. Gale said he has no strong feeling one way or another. He understands the interest in keeping connections open, and indicated the White River Hatchery Program question will eventually move to the Policy Committee.

K. Murdoch said updates could be provided to the Policy Committee on the issues upcoming. In addition to the White River hatchery program, there could be updates from the summer Chinook Salmon (sub-yearling) workshop, although the PRCC may not have all conclusions at that time and may still be working through next steps. Updates could be provided on survival study planning and housekeeping on NNI funds and habitat funds.

C. Jackson also supported holding the meeting with the same justification. S. Carlon said he was going to suggest meeting every other year but agreed to the suggestions that have been proposed.

C. Dotson said the White River hatchery framework is the result of Statement of Agreement (SOA) 2013-01 from the Policy Committee; they might need a reminder about how that framework came out of that committee.

K. Truscott agreed with convening the Policy Committee in part to make sure that a rapport is maintained and to identify potential issues on the horizon that may or may not come to the Policy Committee. He said another is the 91% to 93% survival issue, and C. Dotson agreed that the Policy Committee will eventually be hearing dialogue about it.

K. Truscott asked from logistical standpoint whether HCP and PRCC Policy Committee meetings can occur on the same day, suggesting they are more likely to have better attendance.

Grant PUD agreed to lead the organization, and L. Rohrbach agreed to discussion coordinating around same dates with the HCP Policy Chair.

VIII. Next Meetings

The next meeting of the PRCC will be May 28, in person, at the Confluence Technology Center with a Teams meeting for virtual attendance.