

Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Meeting

Microsoft Teams
Tuesday, May 28, 2024
9:00 a.m. to 10:15 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, Interim
 Facilitator
 Kristi Geris, Anchor QEA, Technical Support
 Curt Dotson, GPUD
 Rod O'Connor GPUD
 Scott Carlon, NMFS

Bill Gale, USFWS
 Chad Jackson, WDFW
 Andrew Murdoch, WDFW
 Keely Murdoch, YN
 Nathan Buck, Wanapum
 Tom Lorz, CTUIR

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*).
- L. Rohrbach will reach out to K. Truscott to obtain his approval of the April 23 minutes. (*This item is complete*).
- C. Dotson will determine whether there is a separate monitoring plan for gas bubble trauma (GBT) associated with the Priest Rapids projects.
- L. Rohrbach will work with T. Dresser to identify a date for a 2024 PRCC Policy Committee meeting.

Review Items

- The updated draft 2024 Sub-Yearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Agenda (v.4) was forwarded to the PRCC on June 4, 2024.
- The 5-Year Compliance Gas Abatement Plan (GAP) was forwarded to the PRCC on May 24 and is available for a 30-day review with edits and comments due to Tim Taylor by June 24.

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 follow-up to last month's PRCC Policy Committee (PC) meeting update. C. Dotson added an update on the 5-Year Compliance GAP to the agenda. The agenda was approved by all parties in attendance.

The draft minutes from the April 23 meeting were distributed on May 17. No revisions were received, and the minutes were approved by members who attended that meeting. T. Lorz abstained because he did not attend the April 23 meeting. L. Rohrbach will reach out to K. Truscott (not in attendance) to obtain his approval of the minutes. *(Note: K. Truscott approved the minutes via email on June 18, 2024.)*

II. Sub-yearling Chinook Salmon Workshop Planning

L. Rohrbach recalled that a draft agenda was distributed to the PRCC and asked whether there are questions. None were expressed. K. Geris confirmed there will be a virtual option. L. Rohrbach reviewed the attendee list and verified in-person attendance. She noted that members of the Upper Columbia United Tribes will be attending and asked whether there are any questions or concerns. C. Dotson said if the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Coordinating Committees approved this list, then Grant PUD is also supportive of this list. C. Dotson will relay this to T. Dresser in case T. Dresser has questions or concerns.

B. Gale asked whether Tracy Hillman (PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee [HSC] facilitator) plans to attend the workshop. K. Geris recalled that T. Hillman has not attended past workshops, and she believes Anchor QEA asked T. Hillman whether he has interest in attending this year's workshop, and T. Hillman did not express interest. *(Note: Following the meeting, K. Geris reached out to T. Hillman to verify this, and T. Hillman said he will attempt to attend part of the workshop virtually.)*

III. PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee Update – White River Hatchery Program

L. Rohrbach said the PRCC HSC needs to make progress on White River mitigation. This topic is important for the PRCC to track so there are no surprises when it comes to the PRCC and eventually moves into the PRCC PC.

For background, a PRCC PC statement of agreement (SOA) was drafted and approved in 2013 (Attachment A). At that time, the PRCC PC decided that given the technical, scientific, and political challenges, implementing a supplementation program on the White River was not feasible. This was for a 75,000-smolt program. For Grant PUD to meet its Wenatchee spring Chinook Salmon mitigation for brood year (BY) 2013 through BY 2026, the PRCC PC signed this SOA, agreeing to eight provisions. Notably, the sixth provision says that the disposition of White River and non-Nason Creek natural-origin adults encountered during broodstock collections at Tumwater and/or other locations will be the responsibility of the Joint Fisheries Parties. The seventh provision says that by 2026, the PRCC HSC will assess the need to restart a White River spring Chinook Salmon hatchery supplementation program by assembling relevant technical information and overseeing an independent scientific review. The eighth provision says that implementation of this agreement is contingent upon National Marine Fisheries Service issuing a Section 10 permit. This process was put on hold, the PRCC HSC recently picked it back up, and over the last 2 months, the Committee convened additional meetings specifically to review this framework and determine whether the key questions are still relevant. For the most part, everything is still relevant, with small tweaks. More importantly is how the data have evolved since that era. There have been some updates, notably the 10-Year Summary Report.

L. Rohrbach reviewed a White River Decision Tree (Attachment A). The first question is whether the Wenatchee spring Chinook Salmon population is meeting viable salmonid population (VSP) criteria. The PRCC HSC determined it is clearly not. The second question is whether the White River spawning aggregate is necessary to the Wenatchee spring Chinook Salmon population for meeting VSP criteria. This answer is maybe, so the PRCC HSC has now moved onto the third step of convening an expert review panel. The PRCC HSC is discussing which subject matters should be represented on this panel, and the Committee has a long list of action items to complete. The timeline to convene the panel is by early 2025, so work is complete by mid-2025, and then the PRCC HSC will consider the output from the panel. That is, the purpose of the expert panel is to focus on the recovery criteria and provide a recommendation. The panel will not have decision-making authority; rather, the panel will make a recommendation for the PRCC HSC to consider.

Prior to initiating the independent scientific review, the PRCC needs to review and approve the framework and structure of the review. The PRCC HSC expressed interest in a combination of panelists working together and independently. This might mean convening a workshop to share information, but also having panelists develop recommendations separately. In June, the PRCC HSC hopes to have a nearly final vision of the framework, so in July or August, this will come to the PRCC for approval.

B. Gale asked, as PRCC HSC representatives think about panel candidates, is this volunteer based, within the scope of respective positions, or is Grant PUD funding panel members' time and review? Rod O'Connor said Grant PUD is discussing this internally. The focus now is on how to put together the best panel possible, and any contracting needs will be addressed later.

R. O'Connor and K. Murdoch expressed no further updates on this topic. L. Rohrbach will continue to bring updates to the PRCC as more information arises.

IV. 2024 Fish Passage Operations Report

A. Fish Ladder Inspections

K. Murdoch met with Mike Clement during the last week of April and completed the first inspection of the year. The month of May will be handled electronically.

B. Fish Spill Updates

C. Dotson said all turbine units have been in fish spill mode since the start of spill season in early April, except for one brief interruption at Priest Rapids Dam. A few weeks ago, a hazard barrier cable broke during a high-wind event. Attendants noticed a break in the barrier cable and contacted C. Dotson, who notified the PRCC spill representatives. (S. Carlon and B. Gale). Mechanics shut down the bypass, repaired the cable, and the bypass was back up and running within 5 to 6 hours.

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

L. Rohrbach reviewed the adult fish counts through May 18, shown below, which are progressing as expected. C. Dotson confirmed that fish counting techniques are consistent with last year, and he expects no issues. C. Dotson had no other comments.

Project	Spring Chinook Salmon (Adult + Jack)	Summer Chinook Salmon (Adult + Jack)	Fall Chinook Salmon	Sockeye Salmon	Coho Salmon	Steelhead
Priest Rapids	9,389	0	0	0	0	31
Wanapum	9,227	0	0	0	0	33
Rock Island	7,473	0	0	0	0	32

UPDATES

V. Review of Outstanding No Net Impact-Funded Projects

- **Q4 2023 PRCC No Net Impact (NNI) and Habitat Reports**

L. Rohrbach said the Q4 2023 PRCC NNI and Habitat Funds expenditures and project balances were distributed on April 24. C. Dotson said February 15 was the last installation of annual funding (Q1 2024), which was included in the final minutes from the February 27 meeting. (Note: The final reports from Q1 2024 were forwarded to the PRCC again on June 5.)

- **Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II**
- **Northern Pike Removal (2022 to 2024)**
- **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Passive Integrated Transponder-Tag Detection Barge**
- **2024 Quincy Northern Pikeminnow Derby**
- **2024 Real Time Research (RTR) Avian Predation Study**

C. Dotson said RTR is conducting three aerial flights as part of a contract funded by the PRCC and Bonneville Power Administration. On May 18, RTR discovered new Caspian tern colonies in North Potholes Reservoir. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) was

notified, which then contacted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire permitting to work on the island. By May 21, USBR deployed drift fences, flagging, and decoys as deterrents. On the island, crews observed 176 Caspian terns and 81 scrapes, performed testing for sites, and collected 27 eggs. Of note is USBR's quick response time, communication, and coordination. New personnel are overseeing USBR's responsibilities under the Avian Management Plan for the Potholes area. Grant PUD is appreciative of how this PRCC funding is being spent and the product resulting from it. L. Rohrbach recalled that *Avian Predation Project Weekly Report: April 14–20*, including bird counts to date, was distributed following the last meeting on April 23. S. Carlon asked about the new USBR personnel. C. Dotson said this is Juddson Sechrist from the Boise, Idaho, office. L. Rohrbach asked when this annual report is typically provided. C. Dotson said sometime between November and January. (*Note: Avian Predation Weekly Report: May 19–25, including bird counts to date, was distributed following the meeting on May 28.*)

C. Dotson clarified that these avian predation weekly reports are a separate effort than the report on pelicans conducted on Badger Island. L. Rohrbach added that this report (*Predation of Adult Sockeye Salmon by American White Pelicans in the Columbia River*) was distributed in a separate email (on May 21, 2024).

VI. 5-Year Compliance GAP

L. Rohrbach said the 5-Year Compliance GAP was forwarded to the PRCC on May 24 and is available for a 30-day review with edits and comments due to T. Taylor by June 24. C. Dotson said this plan is developed per Grant PUD's Washington State Department of Ecology 401 Water Certification. The plan is consistent with past plans and is an update on water quality compliance for the next 5 years.

B. Gale asked whether there is a separate monitoring plan for GBT monitoring at the project and downstream of the project. C. Dotson said he can check with T. Taylor and can get back to B. Gale about this.

VII. PRCC PC Meeting

L. Rohrbach recalled discussing last month a possible PRCC PC meeting. There was a request from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation about coordinating the PRCC PC meeting and HCP Policy Committees meeting to minimize travel and commitments of time, but it has become apparent this will be difficult to do. There may be more business to discuss in both forums that would be difficult to cover in a single day.

For the PRCC PC, the thought is to convene a meeting sometime in late summer to fall, at least to cover the White River SOA. L. Rohrbach needs to talk more with T. Dresser and poll people, as well as determine whether in-person attendance is required or whether there will be a virtual option. B. Gale said August is bad for him timing-wise. K. Murdoch said, even though the PRCC HSC will not be done with the independent scientific review or recommendation, it seems since the White River SOA is a PRCC PC SOA, it would not hurt to provide an update on progress to date. L. Rohrbach said this was her thought too. K. Murdoch said for the Yakama Nation (YN), there are different policy staff than when the White River SOA was developed and approved, and this may be true for other Parties. L. Rohrbach shared on Teams the current list of PRCC PC

representatives (Attachment B). She recalled that the PRCC PC convened last summer for an information exchange and relationship building. This list remains unchanged from last summer.

L. Rohrbach said K. Truscott and T. Dresser also suggested updating the PRCC PC on the upcoming survival study. K. Murdoch said, also, any outcomes from the Sub-Yearling Chinook Salmon Workshop. L. Rohrbach said this is another consideration: making sure participants have enough time to discuss the information from the workshop in their respective committees. She will keep working with T. Dresser about reaching a date for a PRCC PC meeting. Grant PUD already has indicated support for convening wherever is convenient.

B. Gale asked whether the PRCC PC has alternates. L. Rohrbach said she is unsure. K. Murdoch said she believes Shannon Adams is the YN PRCC PC alternate, but she will check.

VIII. Subcommittee Updates

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

- Priest Rapids Fish Forum—met May 1; next meeting June 5.
- Habitat Subcommittee—met May 9; next meeting June 13.
- Fall Chinook Work Group—met May 7; next meeting Oct 1.
- Hatchery Subcommittee—met May 15 and 16; next meeting June 20.

IX. SOAs Discussed in 2024

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

X. Next Meetings

The next meeting of the PRCC will be June 25, in person, at the Confluence Technology Center with a Teams meeting for virtual attendance.