



## Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Meeting

**Teams Meeting**  
**Thursday January 24, 2023**  
**9:00 a.m.- 11:45 AM**

### Final Meeting Minutes

#### **PRCC Representatives and Alternatives**

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Curt Dotson, Tom Dresser (Alt), GPUD	Jim Craig, Bill Gale (Alt) USFWS
Kirk Truscott, Casey Baldwin (alt), CTCR	Chad Jackson, A. Murdoch (Alt) WDFW
Tom Skiles, CTUIR	Keely Murdoch, Brandon Rogers (Alt), YN
Scott Carlon, Justin Yeager (Alt), NMFS	

#### **Meeting Attendees**

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Bryan Nordlund, Facilitator	Tim Taylor, GPUD
Larissa Rohrbach, Anchor QEA	Scott Carlon, NMFS
Tom Skiles, CTUIR	Jim Craig, USFWS
Curt Dotson, GPUD	Chad Jackson, WDFW
Tom Dresser, GPUD	Andrew Murdoch WDFW
Rod O'Connor, GPUD	Keely Murdoch, YN

#### **Actions Items from January 24, 2023, Meeting**

- Request for RTR to provide a presentation on Avian Predation 2022 efforts and activities in the February Meeting.
- Request for CCT to provide an update on Northern Pike Removal Efforts (February Meeting - K. Truscott to arrange).
- Request for Grant PUD to share marking and tagging information for upper Columbia hatchery-origin fish in 2023 with RTR.
- Preparation for a continuing discussion in the next meeting, led by WDFW, on evaluating adaptive management of expanding annual fish-spill seasons for the benefit of adult fallback, adult steelhead in particular, at middle and upper Columbia River hydro projects.
- Ongoing request for PRCC members to share additional thoughts on survival study planning in preparation for the February meeting.

## **Decision Item(s)**

- The PRCC approved the NNI funding (H601) request of \$297,669 from Real Time Research (RTR) on *Avian Predation on ESA-listed Juvenile Salmonids on the Middle Columbia River, 2023*. All representatives that were present in the meeting approved on January 24; K. Truscott approved for the CTCR following the meeting on January 26, 2023.
- The PRCC approved the NNI funding (H601) request of \$25,000 for the *Northern Pikeminnow Fishing Derby 2023* from the Quincy Valley Chamber of Commerce/Tourism Association. All representatives that were present in the meeting approved on January 24; K. Truscott approved for the CTCR following the meeting on January 26, 2023.
- The PRCC approved SOA 2023-01 for the PRCC and PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee regarding Grant PUD's *Sockeye Salmon Program*. All representatives that were present in the meeting approved on January 24; K. Truscott approved for the CTCR following the meeting on January 26, 2023.
- The PRCC finalized per agreed edits and approved SOA 2022-03 regarding *Expansion of Fish Mode at Wanapum Dam* by email on January 30, 2023.

### **I. Welcome, Announcements and Introductions**

- L. Rohrbach (Anchor QEA) was introduced to provide administrative support to the PRCC and facilitator through 2023.

### **II. Agenda Review**

- C. Jackson added a discussion on adult steelhead overshoot and fallback, to follow on from a presentation given by A. Murdoch in the December 16, 2022 meeting.

### **III. Meeting Minutes Status**

- Comments to the November 16, 2022, PRCC meeting minutes were due by December 28, 2022, and have been finalized.
- The December 16, 2022, PRCC meeting minutes were distributed by B. Nordlund by email on December 26, 2022, with comments due by January 26, 2023. Nordlund will recirculate minutes for approval in the next meeting if there are substantial changes. In the future, L. Rohrbach will circulate a draft version of the minutes for review and a revised version of minutes for approval.

### **IV. Review Items from the December 16, 2022 Meeting**

- Timeline/Schedule illustrating key decision milestones for 2025-2027 survival evaluations - to be send out to PRCC.

- Revised proposal for the NNI funding request from Real Time Research (RTR) on *Avian Predation on ESA-listed Juvenile Salmonids on the Middle Columbia River, 2023*, sent by email on January 23, 2023.
- Project specification sheet for the NNI funding request for the *Northern Pikeminnow Fishing Derby 2023* from the Quincy Valley Chamber of Commerce/Tourism Association, sent by email on January 13, 2023.
- SOA 2023-01 for the *PRCC and PRCC Hatchery Sub-committee regarding Grant PUD's Sockeye Salmon Program*, approved by the Priest Rapids Hatchery Sub-committee on January 18, 2023, and sent by email to the PRCC that same day.

## V. 2022 Fish Passage Operations Report

### Update on investigations for fish count discrepancy

T. Dresser said Grant PUD is making the following changes to improve upon fish count accuracy in 2023:

- Grant PUD is hiring a contractor (Four Peaks Environmental) to implement fish counting at Priest Rapids Dam (PRD) and Wanapum Dam this year.
- Grant PUD is installing new servers for better data transfer and storage.
- The cycling (opening and closing) of crowdors will be better documented with metrics and data collection protocols. T. Dresser can provide a presentation in the future to show how many fish are being crowded, passing, etc.

Letters provided by WDFW and YN were helpful for making the case within Grant PUD that these were important investments.

T. Dresser said he has a high level of confidence in the PRD counts because they are similar to counts at Rock Island Dam (RIS). Counts at Wanapum Dam are not accurate. There are major discrepancies with the sockeye, coho, and steelhead counts at Wanapum Dam. Grant PUD is planning to flag the Wanapum Dam fish count data from 2022 or remove it from their external website with a statement about the inaccuracy of the counts. Grant PUD is reaching out to University of Washington Data Access in Real Time (DART) and Fish Passage Center (FPC) to remove those data from their databases.

T. Skiles asked T. Dresser to explain more about why he has confidence in the PRD counts. T. Dresser gave the following reasons:

- Seven to 8 seasonal fish counter positions were filled at the start of the season. Additional staff are typically brought on-board as the season progresses, however Grant PUD had difficulty filling those positions as some long-term, experienced counters retired, and some found more permanent employment. Grant PUD contracted with Four Peaks Environmental to take on a large share of

the counting at PRD in September through November, which helped with the later part of the fish count season.

- The routine QA/QC work throughout the season showed generally lower error rates at PRD than Wanapum Dam. For example, the errors in Sockeye Salmon counts at Wanapum Dam were traced to a single individual, whose error rates ranged from 50% to 90% during the 2 to 5-day peak of the season.
- The discrepancy between PRD and RIS counts are not that large. Grant PUD is also examining fallback rates between RIS and PRD to determine if some fish counted at RI are falling back and reascending. This evaluation also includes numbers affected by harvest in the PRD pool for Sockeye Salmon and Chinook Salmon.

S. Carlon said that NMFS and others around the region would prefer that Wanapum Dam fish counts from 2022 be posted to the web, but flagged with a note about the problem with the counts. T. Dresser said Grant PUD has talked internally, and he directed staff to reach out to DART and FPC to delete the data completely, and to flag the data on Grant PUD's external-facing site. The reasoning is that 10 to 15 years from now, such as during a relicensing process, someone may try to use those data without that context. Grant PUD will retain the data internally but does not want it included in publicly-accessible databases for use by others without proper information. T. Dresser said he has a lot of confidence in counts being performed by Four Peaks Environmental and is looking forward to improvements in 2023.

### **Fish ladder inspections**

No updates at this time.

### **Fish spill updates**

No updates until fish-spill is reinitiated in spring 2023.

### **Fish counts for 2022**

No updates until fish counts are reinitiated in April 2023.

## **VI. 2023 Avian Predation Proposal (RTR) – Request for NNI Funding for Approval.**

C. Dotson said there have been some questions about the 2023 Avian Predation Proposal brought forth by members of the PRCC. An updated version of RTR's proposal (version 3) was distributed to the committee by email on January 23, 2023.

- Regarding the analysis of wild versus hatchery-origin fish, a memorandum was distributed by email on February 2, 2022, which addressed how the analysis was done for the 2021 season. The analysis of predation rates on wild and hatchery smolts will be carried forward in 2023.
- Regarding analysis of fish from different starting locations, two groups will be compared: a PIT-tagged group will be released at the tailrace of RIS, and RTR amended their proposal to include PIT-tagged fish originally detected at Rocky

Reach Dam Juvenile Bypass (RRJ) in response to a request made last year. That addition is shown in green font in version 3 of the proposal. This year will provide 2 years of analysis and comparisons between those 2 groups of fish.

A. Murdoch said he has not yet seen a breakdown of predation rates between hatchery versus wild fish, and perhaps that will be shown in next month's presentation. There are a large number of hatchery steelhead released in almost every subbasin of the upper Columbia Basin (in the Okanogan, Methow, and Wenatchee Subbasins) that are not adipose-fin clipped (unclipped), but do have coded wire tags (CWT), he is interested in knowing how RTR is identifying whether fish are of hatchery or natural origin. That will be critical in their analysis; if they are mistakenly including unclipped hatchery fish as natural fish their data from previous years may be biased. A. Murdoch asked if all fish are being scanned for CWT or if scales are collected to determine origin (based on growth patterns). All hatchery fish are supposed to have at least an external clip or an internal tag.

C. Dotson said any of the fish in the group passing RRJ will be based on PIT tags, so their origin will be known. At RIS they look for adipose fin clips and external signs of being reared in a hatchery, like worn fins or noses, and every fish PIT-tagged for this analysis at RIS is photographed. In the last report from 2021, the comparison of hatchery versus wild fish is in one of the appendices and we can request that comparison be shown in next month's presentation.

K. Murdoch said that within the Broodstock Collection Protocols document produced by HCP Hatchery Committee and PRCC Hatchery Sub-committee each year; there is an appendix that outlines all the different marks on hatchery juveniles that could be encountered. It would be helpful for RTR to receive a copy of that appendix for 2023. Most unclipped fish have a snout CWT, however there is a subgroup that comes out of the Okanogan Subbasin that does not have a snout tag but does have a body CWT as part of the CTCR production, and part of Grant PUD's mitigation. That particular group could be tricky if only looking for snout CWTs.

C. Dotson spoke to an RTR study lead during the meeting and reported back that in past years, every smolt PIT-tagged for the study at RIS was scanned for CWTs. RTR looks for anything that would indicate a fish was in a hatchery facility, including all marks, CWTs, worn fins or worn snouts. RTR will make sure they are again scanning for CWTs in the upcoming year. Tagging at RRJ is done by Chelan PUD's crew, so it's not certain if that crew has been as diligent in scanning for CWTs.

K. Murdoch said its important to note there are steelhead being overwintered in large ponds (e.g. Chiwawa) that won't have fin wear. The CWTs are placed in the body to differentiate adults originating from the Okanogan Subbasin when they return to Wells Dam so they can be returned to the Okanogan rather than sent to the Methow programs. K. Murdoch suggested confirming with K. Truscott where the body CWT is actually placed.

B. Nordlund asked K. Murdoch if all fish from the upper Columbia Basin hatchery programs are tagged or marked. K. Murdoch answered yes, either with an adipose clip or a CWT.

All representatives of the PRCC in attendance approved the proposal for the *Avian Predation on ESA-listed Juvenile Salmonids on the Middle Columbia River, 2023 (Updated January 22, 2023)*. K. Truscott approved for the CTCR following the meeting on January 26, 2023. Several representatives noted their appreciation that RTR make changes proposed by K. Murdoch last month.

#### **VII. Quincy Pikeminnow Derby – Request for NNI Funding for Approval.**

T. Dresser said an NNI funding proposal request has been received from the Quincy Valley Chamber of Commerce to fund their annual Northern Pikeminnow derby. Quincy did make one change last year to exclude a 4-wheeler from the raffle in response to PRCC concerns and this was repeated for the 2023 request.. The prize structure has been changed this year to put emphasis on targeting larger fish. All representatives of the PRCC in attendance approved the funding request and K. Truscott approved for the CTCR following the meeting on January 26, 2023.

#### **VIII. Grant PUD's Sockeye Program SOA 2023-01 for Approval.**

T. Dresser thanked K. Murdoch, M. Tonseth, and K. Truscott for working with Grant PUD's team who spent nearly a year and a half to come to agreement on the language in the SOA. K. Murdoch thanked T. Dresser, noting this SOA represents a lot of work and that she is happy with the end result. T. Dresser said this is a great agreement to continue supporting the productivity of that population. This SOA requires Grant PUD to continue to fund the hatchery production program, support upgrades to the facility necessary to expand the number of eggs over the next 3 years, and commits to funding operations and maintenance, and monitoring and evaluation as part of this program. The PRCC Hatchery Sub-Committee will also evaluate the feasibility of collecting broodstock or gametes in years when conditions are limiting in the Canadian Okanagan River. There will be future points where the PRCC Policy Representatives will need to be involved to understand the program and make decisions. All representatives of the PRCC in attendance approved SOA 2023-01 and K. Truscott approved for the CTCR following the meeting on January 26, 2023.

#### **IX. Steelhead Overshoot and Fallback Continuing Discussion.**

A. Murdoch gave a presentation on steelhead overshoots last month to both the HCP-CC and PRCC.

C. Jackson said the HCP Parties that do not implement any fall spill for adult fallbacks and Grant PUD does at its projects. WDFW would like to ask the HCP-CC and PRCC to continue evaluating fall spill to determine if it is encompassing all of the potential fallback period, and today would like to know the PRCC's interest in continuing this as a recurring discussion topic or creating a subgroup to continue the discussion. A. Murdoch said one of the eventual goals would be to adaptively manage fall spill to maximize the return of fish to the mid- and upper Columbia basins. WDFW does have an analytical approach that could be used to estimate the spill necessary, but it requires all the HCP and PRCC Parties to participate. Grant PUD has been supportive of spilling in the fall for adult fallback, there is also some spill that could be helpful in the spring. However if only the lower two dams are spilling and the upper three dams are not, the overall goal for helping downriver populations will not be achieved. WDFW is starting this conversation with the PRCC and HCP-CC's.

J. Craig said these discussions absolutely should continue; there could be opportunities to improve recovery especially for steelhead populations. He agreed it will take all the PRCC and HCP Parties to make some significant changes.

S. Carlon asked if Grant PUD's fall spill is 2.5 kcfs at both dams. C. Dotson said yes, although the actual spill is affected by forebay elevation because of the fixed openings. Grant PUD transitions into fall spill, for adult fallback, operations normally during approximately the third week of August (as soon as summer juvenile spill ends) through November 15, using both the Wanapum Dam and PRD bypasses. At Wanapum Dam, the bypass is used to achieve 2.5 kcfs of spill instead of the sluiceway because of the gate orientation.

K. Murdoch agreed it is appropriate to continue this conversation; the Priest Rapids projects are well ahead of where the other projects are on fall spill. To adaptively manage or change spill at the Priest Rapids projects, it will also need to be managed at the projects upstream and this may require coordination with the HCP-CC.

C. Dotson said the Priest Rapids projects spill more for adult fallback than any other hydro projects on the Snake or Columbia Rivers (the Federal Snake River projects spill for 3 days per week, 4 hours per day for adult fallback). Speaking only for Grant PUD, there is an interest in both internal discussion and committee discussions to understand the data and models to be used, and to understand how those programs would be implemented and how they would be evaluated for effectiveness.

A. Murdoch said he would encourage an open discussion and thinking out of the box on how the spill would be used. For the Grant PUD projects, the biggest opportunity appears to be in the spring by adding additional days of spill, or using some of the fall spill days in the spring. It may not be necessary to spill every day in the fall. There may be some flexibility for the PRCC to identify the spill magnitude and duration.

T. Skiles asked about the Wanapum sluiceway whose downstream wall collapsed several years ago, whether it provides any of the year-round flow. C. Dotson said the parts of the sluiceway that collapsed have been completely tagged out and fall spill for adults has been moved completely over to the fish bypass. Due to its design the Wanapum bypass is actually a larger opening and a trumpet shape egress that spreads out allowing for a larger volume of spill while maintaining lower velocities. The fish bypass was specifically designed for passing fish. Grant PUD redesigned that sluiceway with velocities that were not designed specifically for fish passage; the egress down the sluiceway to the tailrace is high-velocity. T. Skiles asked if the juvenile bypass operates at the same forebay elevations as the sluiceway. C. Dotson said yes, the Wanapum bypass was designed to pass 2.5 kcfs for adult fallback, and was designed as a secondary back up to the sluiceway for spilling, and that indeed came to pass when the sluiceway wall collapsed. T. Skiles asked if the sluiceway wingwall has been removed. C. Dotson said no, its still in place, lying over on its side.

B. Nordlund said the Biological Opinion for the Priest Rapids project was the first time that fallback spill was included for a dam's relicensing. He asked how the PRCC would like to carry this forward as a discussion topic. C. Dotson said Grant PUD would not want this to go into a subcommittee and would prefer the discussions to occur within the

PRCC. The PRCC agreed, and B. Nordlund said this will be maintained as an ongoing discussion item within the PRCC.

C. Jackson said WDFW would prepare a more substantive discussion for the next PRCC and HCP-CC meetings. C. Dotson said CTUIR (T. Skiles) and Grant PUD are not part of the HCP-CC and asked C. Jackson to update the PRCC of how discussions progress in the HCP-CC.

#### **X. Revised Fish Mode at Wanapum Dam SOA 2022-03 for Approval.**

T. Dresser shared the most recently-revised version of SOA 2022-03 in the meeting. In mid-January, T. Skiles provided edits to Grant PUD. T. Skiles said he introduced some language, now moved to footnotes, around the concept of “compelling evidence” and consensus agreement around what that would be. T. Dresser said Grant PUD preferred the original language, however he modified the footnotes to link the language to the to force majeure language in the SSSA since the PRCC last reviewed this SOA. Grant PUD asked PRCC members to indicate whether they agreed with those suggested revisions.

T. Skiles said he was slightly uneasy with the lack of definition around “compelling evidence”, but he would vote to approve Grant PUD’s suggested wording. K. Murdoch said she agrees with T. Skiles that “compelling evidence” is a vague term; what may be compelling to one Party may not be for another, and it’s up for interpretation by individuals. This is a consensus committee, and all Parties would have to vote if this scenario to consider “compelling evidence” were to play out. Because consensus decision-making is embedded in everything we do, she would be comfortable approving the SOA “as is”. T. Dresser said he agreed with K. Murdoch’s assumption.

K. Murdoch said she wanted to note that as survival study discussions continue, if the survival study is set up as is currently proposed (with one group released at the RIS tailrace, and a downstream group released at the PRD tailrace, without a release group in between) this compelling evidence is going to be really hard to evaluate. In the worst-case scenario, if survival standards are not achieved, there will be no way of knowing in which project the problem is occurring; that compelling evidence may not exist.

Tom Dresser said he considered that when drafting this SOA and tried to address what K. Murdoch and T. Skiles had suggested as an “off ramp”. In the second bullet of the SOA, Grant PUD is taking on all the risk; the burden of proof is entirely Grant PUD’s responsibility. If Grant PUD doesn’t achieve 86.49% joint project survival, the projects revert back to the previous operation and so Grant PUD’s would need to provide the compelling evidence to demonstrate to the PRCC where the problems occurred.

K. Truscott provided additional suggested edits by email to the footnote on page one following the meeting on January 26, 2023. All representatives of the PRCC in attendance approved SOA 2022-03 by email on January 30, 2023, with the suggested revisions from K. Truscott.

T. Dresser noted that SOA 2022-04 regarding NNI Fund Termination-Standards Achieved was approved by Committee on December 16, 2022, however a clerical problem in the text describing Grant PUD’s status on meeting survival standards at their projects and the text has been corrected.

## **XI. 2025-2027 Survival Evaluation Discussion.**

B. Nordlund said this ongoing discussion item is for the PRCC to start discussing what might occur with different potential survival study results. In particular, the Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement (SSSA) doesn't specify what will happen after the conclusion of a study, or if a problem is identified by the study. The PRCC will have to grapple with this. Nordlund asked Grant PUD to confirm that this is only a juvenile survival study and C. Dotson confirmed that was correct, but asked if there were other objectives that should be discussed.

K. Murdoch said it depends on whether evaluating an ESA-listed species or non-listed species. The SSSA has very different expectations for listed species and the expectation is to continue to try to hit the survival standard. For unlisted species the SSSA allows the PRCC to think about other types of mitigation. K. Murdoch said she commented on the planning document, originally circulated by C. Dotson which identified questions and issues, where she laid out the path forward still stand by, which does potentially involve the NNI Fund. K. Murdoch said others might have a different opinion.

C. Dotson read K. Murdoch's comments in the meeting (re-distributed by email following the meeting). C. Dotson said he agrees that the potential paths forward after the survival study should be made clear prior to implementing the studies. The SSSA allows quite a bit of flexibility for non-listed species; for listed species there are specific standards. K. Murdoch's comments suggest that for non-listed species, the PRCC and Grant PUD could discuss and decide whether to pay into the NNI fund every 10 years or some other interval. Or the decision could be to re-test, depending on how close Grant PUD is to achieving standards. For listed species (yearling Chinook Salmon or Steelhead), if standards are not met, Grant PUD should retest and continue to work toward improving toward meeting standards. Grant PUD could pay into the NNI fund while retesting, or if standards are met, Grant PUD could discontinue payment into the NNI fund for the species tested. K. Murdoch noted that at the time that she wrote that feedback, she was not aware that T. Dresser did not agree that NNI should apply at this step in the process.

S. Carlon said he agrees that to stay in compliance with the Biological Opinion, standards need to be maintained for listed species and meeting the standards are the higher priority over meeting the NNI fund. S. Carlon said he was not prepared to speak to whether to maintain the NNI fund. J. Craig said he appreciates all the discussion moving forward and agrees these points are important. T. Skiles and C. Jackson said they did not have additional comments at this time.

C. Dotson said Grant PUD is currently revising the draft study plan with the goal to distribute it ahead of the February meeting, along with a comment response sheet to support the ongoing discussions. There were comments received from committee members, including suggestions to add appendices. Details are being added to answer questions about smolt lengths and tag burden. The next version will be considered a draft for continued discussion.

B. Nordlund asked for the timeline when the study plan needs to be approved for equipment to be ordered. Dotson said Grant PUD will proceed with ordering data loggers and will start preparing for contracting the for acoustic telemetry work by April. Other aspects of the survival study can continue to be discussed after April. B. Nordlund asked PRCC members to let him or C. Dotson know if they have additional thoughts on survival study planning ahead of next month's meeting.

## Updates

### **XII. Review of Outstanding NNI Funded Projects**

- Lower Wenatchee Instream Flow Enhancement Project Phase II.  
No update since last month.
- **2022 RTR Avian Predation study. RTR is currently finishing their 2022 annual report to Grant PUD and the BPA.** Their presentation to the PRCC will be moved to the February meeting.
- **Northern Pike Removal (2022-2024).** An update on a presentation date will be provided in the February meeting.
- **WDFW PIT tag detection barge.** C. Jackson and A. Murdoch will provide a presentation in mid-summer, following the 2023 yearling outmigration, focused on detection results and overwinter survival.

A PIT tag detection barge with 12 antennas was installed in spring 2022 in the lowest 100 meters of the Wenatchee River, just upstream of the irrigation pipe overpass. The barge was intended to be removed from the river in the winter, however in late summer/fall of 2022, the Wenatchee River dropped to historic low flows of approximately 400 cfs, and the barge became landlocked on a gravel bar. It subsequently became locked in ice during an unusually cold period in December. The ice then broke up during a thaw in January and the barge settled on top of an ice floe. The barge didn't suffer any substantial damage. The PIT antennas were removed; one antenna was pinned beneath the barge and will have to be replaced. WDFW Staff are currently preparing for a move with their contractor to move barge back to its original position. To prevent future scenarios like this, WDFW will move the barge to a position lower in the river, downstream of the pedestrian bridge, in late summer allowing it to be more easily moved out of the river at the end of the season, as was intended, and similar to operating a smolt trap. Future operations will be simpler. Funding has been requested from the state to purchase another anchor. There will be a boat maintained near the site to push the barge, as needed, without the need to hire a contractor. The barge will be pulled out of the river when not needed and stored locally.

The barge was operating well during fall freshets, highest numbers of detections were observed during high flows and lower detection numbers at low flows, which appears to be capturing the run-of-river better than smolt traps which typically have negative relationships between flows and detections.

### **XIII. Sub-Committee Updates.**

B. Nordlund has forwarded the latest subcommittee distributions he has received to date via email to PRCC members and alternates.

- Priest Rapids Fish Forum – January 4 conference call.
- Habitat Subcommittee – January 12 meeting.
- Fall Chinook Work Group – no meeting in January. Update to be distributed by Bryan following today’s meeting.
- Hatchery Subcommittee – next meeting is February 15, 2023.

### **XIV. Next Meetings**

The next PRCC meetings are scheduled for February 28 at 9 AM (virtual) and March 28, 2023 at 9 AM (at Douglas PUD).