



Priest Rapids Fish Forum Conference Call

Wednesday, 2 November 2022
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

FINAL MINUTES

PRFF Members

RD Nelle, USFWS
Ralph Lampman, Donella Miller, YN
Nathan and Clayton Buck, Wanapum
Jason McLellan, Bret Nine, CCT
Mike Clement, Chris Mott, Grant PUD
Tracy Hillman, Facilitator

Patrick Verhey, Laura Heironimus, WDFW
Breean Zimmerman, WDOE
Aaron Jackson, Carl Merkle, CTUIR
Marchelle Foster, BIA
Tom Skiles, CRITFC/CTUIR

Meeting Attendees

Ralph Lampman, YN
Mike Clement, Grant PUD
RD Nelle, USFWS
Jason McLellan, CCT
Tim Taylor, Grant PUD
Erin Harris, Grant PUD

Paul Grutter, Golder
Tom Skiles, CRITFC/CTUIR
Patrick Verhey, WDFW
Chris Mott, Grant PUD
Laura Heironimus, WDFW
Tracy Hillman, Facilitator

Action Items:

- None.

Decision Items:

- None.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Tracy Hillman welcomed everyone to the meeting and identified all attendees.

II. Agenda Review

The PRFF reviewed and approved the November agenda with one addition: Update on Resident Fish Surveys.

III. Approve September Meeting Notes

The PRFF reviewed and approved the 7 September 2022 meeting minutes.

IV. Review Action Items

There were no action items to review.

V. White Sturgeon

2022 White Sturgeon Spawning and Rearing – Ralph Lampman reported that all fish on station are doing well. They are growing and average about 38 fish per pound.

Mike Clement thanked the Yakama Nation for providing a lamprey aquarium display for Archaeology Days, which was hosted by Wanapum and Grant PUD at the Wanapum Heritage Center. The event was held on 25-26 October. The first day of the event is Youth Day, while the second day is the Adult Program. Mike said this is an annual event and those who participated in the event very much appreciated the lamprey aquarium.

Juvenile Index Monitoring – Paul Grutter with Golder gave an update on juvenile sturgeon index monitoring, which occurred in both reservoirs from 12 September to 20 October 2022. Paul said they took fin rays from all four wild fish captured (three from Priest Rapids Reservoir and one from Wanapum Reservoir). The samples were sent to Jason McLellan for age analysis. Paul indicated that they conducted 360 overnight sets distributed between Wanapum (270 overnight sets) and Priest Rapids (90 overnight sets) reservoirs. They used 400-foot ground lines with 40 gangions per line. As before, they used 2/0 and 4/0 circle hooks. All gangions were baited with pickled squid and lines were pulled about every 24 hours during sampling. Paul reminded the group that the results are preliminary and may change as they complete their analyses.

Paul said they captured 687 juvenile sturgeon in 2022 (498 in Wanapum and 189 in Priest Rapids reservoirs). He said the capture of 189 fish in Priest Rapids reservoir was a new record. The catch in Wanapum was lower than the catch in 2021 (754 juvenile sturgeon were captured in 2021). The lower catch this year may be related to the lower flows this year. Paul also described the distribution of catch among the upper, middle, and lower sections of the reservoirs. As in past years, the catch of juvenile sturgeon was highest in the upper reaches in both reservoirs. He said brood years 2013, 2014, 2017, and 2018 made up most of the catch in Wanapum and brood years 2012, 2012, and 2014 made up most of the catch in Priest Rapids reservoir. Most of the earlier brood years have recruited away from the juvenile capture gear. Paul said some fish released into Wanapum have moved into Priest Rapids Reservoir. Entrainment was highest for brood years 2013 and 2014. A total of 205 fish captured this year had been recaptured previously. One fish has been recaptured six times. There were some marked fish with no record (~10 fish). These could be fish that shed their PIT tags or were not reported in the PIT-tag database. Some fish from the Rocky Reach and Wells programs were also detected in the project area. Paul indicated that the fish appear to be growing and doing well.

Mike Clement asked if sampling in the upper Wanapum Reservoir was successful because of the lower flows this year? Paul said they were able to sample in some locations in the upper reservoir (upstream from the islands) because of the lower flows. The lower flows resulted in lower water velocities.

Other White Sturgeon Items – No other White Sturgeon items were discussed.

VI. Pacific Lamprey

Adult Trapping at Priest Rapids Dam - Mike Clement reported that adult Pacific lamprey trapping began on 18 July at Priest Rapids Dam and ended on 8 September. They trapped four days per week. In total, they collected 2,300 adult lamprey at Priest Rapids Dam. A total of 750 adult lamprey, which were captured during the first five weeks of trapping, were provided to Douglas PUD for their translocation and fish passage studies. A total of 50 adult lamprey went to CTCR for their translocation program. These 50 fish were released into tributaries to the Okanogan River. Consistent with the SOA, the remainder of the fish captured in 2022 (1,500 fish) were transported upstream of Rock Island Dam and released at Kirby-Billingsley Hydro Park. Mike said they counted just over 11,000 adult lamprey at Priest Rapids Dam. This means they captured about 17% of the run of adult lamprey at Priest Rapids Dam. Mike said this capture rate is consistent with previous years. Mike added that they nearly exceeded their capacity to hold fish during the trapping period.

Ralph Lampman asked whether they captured any dwarf (<300 mm) adult lamprey this year. Mike said they did not capture any fish <300 mm. The smallest was about 450 mm.

Other Pacific Lamprey Items – No other Pacific lamprey items were discussed.

VII. Bull Trout

Upper Mid-Columbia Annual Bull Trout Working Group Meeting – Tracy Hillman reported that the USFWS initiated Bull Trout Working Groups across Washington in 2020/2021 as part of their 5-year status review process. A second meeting for each working group occurred in early 2022. The USFWS would like to continue this work on a yearly basis to: (1) provide an opportunity for everyone to get together and share new information or work benefitting the recovery of Bull Trout and (2) maintain and update the Recovery Unit Implementation Plan's (RUIP) threats assessment on a continuous basis.

Although the USFWS would like to continue the process of updating their threats assessment, they would also like to take the time to discuss two Bull Trout projects:

1. Bull Trout Species Status Assessment (SSA). The draft SSA, which will inform the USFWS's 5-year review, is anticipated to be released for review late this year.
2. Bull Trout Recovery Framework. The USFWS, WDFW, and tribes have been working together on a document that will help provide guidance and assist in sequencing funding and implementation of recovery actions for Bull Trout work within Washington State. This document is not intended to replace watershed plans but provides a needed linkage between watershed plans and the RUIP's and provides guidance on complex recovery topics.

The Working Group Meeting for the Upper Mid-Columbia will be on 26 January 2023 from 1:00-3:30 pm. If you are unable to attend, the USFWS recommends you find an alternate to attend in your absence. The USFWS will send out pre-meeting homework, a detailed agenda, and any other materials in early January. Please contact Erin Britton Kuttel, Jeff Chan, or Marie Winkowski if you have questions.

Other Bull Trout Items – No other Bull Trout items were discussed.

VIII. Resident Fish

Resident Fish Surveys - Mike Clement reported that WDFW began their resident fish surveys on 24 October 2022. Sampling was interrupted because of weather; however, they were able to complete the surveys on 30 October. Mike said the preliminary results indicate that WDFW sampled fewer fish this year than during the last survey (2017). This year, WDFW added a second boat, which decreased the amount of time to complete sampling. Mike said this sampling occurs every five years. The draft report will be available for review in early 2023.

Other Resident Fish Items – No other Resident Fish items were discussed.

IX. Adjourn

With no additional business to discuss, Tracy Hillman adjourned the meeting at 10:30 am.

X. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the PRFF will be on 7 December 2022.