



Priest Rapids Fish Forum

Conference Call

Wednesday, 1 May 2024
 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

FINAL MINUTES

PRFF Members

RD Nelle, Emily Orling, USFWS
 Ralph Lampman, Keely Murdoch, YN
 Nathan and Clayton Buck, Wanapum
 Jason McLellan, Bret Nine, CTCR
 Mike Clement, Chris Mott, Grant PUD
 Tracy Hillman, Chair

Patrick Verhey, Benjamin Cox, WDFW
 Chad Brown, WDOE
 Aaron Jackson, Carl Merkle, CTUIR
 Steve Lewis, BIA
 N/A, CRITFC

Meeting Attendees

Mike Clement, Grant PUD
 Patrick Verhey, WDFW
 Ralph Lampman, YN
 Jason McLellan, CTCR
 Tracy Hillman, Chair

RD Nelle, USFWS
 Chris Mott, Grant PUD
 Cory Kamphaus, YN
 Laura Heironimus, WDFW

Action Items:

- Tracy Hillman and Mike Clement will draft language regarding a five-year extension of the 2016 White Sturgeon stocking SOA. This will be shared with the PRFF and discussed during their June meeting.
- Laura Heironimus will provide the PRFF with WDFW reports describing and summarizing their sampling of White Sturgeon in John Day reservoir.
- Ralph Lampman will update the Upper Columbia Juvenile Source Lamprey Datasheet and send it to Tracy Hillman for distribution to the PRFF.

Decision Items:

- The PRFF agreed to extend the 2016 White Sturgeon Stocking SOA one additional year. This will cover the collection of broodstock in 2024 and the release of juveniles in 2025.

I. Welcome and Introductions

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

II. Agenda Review

The PRFF reviewed and approved the May agenda.

III. Approve March Meeting Notes

The PRFF reviewed and approved the 6 March 2024 meeting minutes.

IV. Review Action Items

The PRFF reviewed the following action item from the March meeting:

- Laura Heironimus will check with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to see whether they will conduct any White Sturgeon research between McNary and John Day dams during Grant PUD broodstock collection efforts this year. **Complete. Mike Clement coordinated with ODFW (see discussion under Section V).**
- Ralph Lampman will update the Upper Columbia Juvenile Source Lamprey Datasheet and send it to Tracy Hillman for distribution to the PRFF. **Ongoing.**
- Ralph Lampman will check to see if any investigators on the Columbia River will be tagging lamprey with HDX PIT tags in 2024. Mike Clement will use this information to determine whether Grant PUD needs to activate their HDX PIT tag arrays. **Complete. An email from Lyman Jim states that there will be no PIT tagging of adult lamprey at Bonneville Dam this year.**
- Ralph Lampman will share the Pacific Lamprey Upper Columbia Regional Implementation Plan and the Pacific Lamprey Predation Report with the PRFF. **Complete. Ralph provided these reports to the PRFF after the March meeting.**
- The PRFF will review the draft Bull Trout Monitoring and Evaluation Plan – 15-Year Status Report and provide comments to Grant PUD by 22 March 2024. **Complete. Grant PUD addressed all comments received and sent the final report to FERC.**
- The PRFF will review the draft 2023 Draft Aquatic Invasive Species Control and Prevention Plan Annual Report and provide comments to Grant PUD by 1 April 2024. **Complete. Grant PUD addressed all comments received and sent the final report to FERC.**

V. White Sturgeon

White Sturgeon Tagging, Testing, and Release – Mike Clement reported that Grant PUD, Blue Leaf Environmental, and the Yakama Nation tagged juvenile sturgeon and tested them for spontaneous autopolyploidy during the week of 25 March. Mike said the testing started out a bit rough because the distributor did not provide enough electrolyte solution for the Coulter counter, which is used to assess spontaneous autopolyploidy. The distributor was able to overnight some additional solution and CTCR supplied the remainder of the solution needed for the analyses. They were able to test and tag about

500 fish on the first day and 928 fish the second day, which was a new record at the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery. Mike indicated that only 5 fish tested positive for spontaneous autopolyploidy. These fish were culled. Marking/tagging mortality, however, was higher this year than in the past. This year, 20 fish died post-tagging; typically, only about 5 fish die post-tagging.

Mike stated that they released 3,250 juvenile White Sturgeon into the project area on 23 April. A total of 2,000 were released into Wanapum reservoir and 1,250 into Priest Rapids reservoir. A tanker truck was used to transport fish to Wanapum reservoir, while a transport trailer was used to transport fish to Priest Rapids reservoir. The transport trailer had to make two trips.

White Sturgeon Broodstock Collection and 2016 SOA Extension – Tracy Hillman indicated that the PRFF needs to discuss whether they want to extend the 2016 White Sturgeon Stocking Statement of Agreement (SOA) another year. He said the PRFF has reviewed and extended the SOA one additional year each year since 2000. Tracy asked whether the group would like to extend the SOA one additional year or consider extending it for up to five years. If the group agrees to extend the SOA over a five-year period, an “off-ramp” could be added that indicates the PRFF can reevaluate the SOA at any time during the five-year period if information (e.g., monitoring data) suggests that the approved stocking levels are deleterious or no longer appropriate. Mike Clement added that the PRFF should also consider alternative broodstock collection sites. Cory Kamphaus indicated that the Yakama Nation will need to discuss a five-year extension of the SOA internally. He requested that Tracy and Mike provide a draft writeup on the five-year extension. Mike and Tracy agreed to do that.

Because broodstock collection is tentatively scheduled to begin in a couple weeks, Tracy asked the PRFF whether they supported a one-year extension of the SOA. All parties present agreed to extend the SOA one more year. This extension covers broodstock collection in 2024 and juvenile releases in 2025.

Mike Clement noted that broodstock collection will occur over a two-week period beginning on 13 May and ending on 24 May. He said collection will occur a bit earlier this year because of warming river temperatures. The goal is to collect enough broodstock to support a 6x6 spawning matrix. Mike added that the Yakama Nation is ready for the fish, Grant PUD has their transport permits, and two boats and crews are ready to begin work. Mike thanked Laura Heironimus for putting him in contact with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Mike indicated that broodstock collection crews will not be tagging fish for ODFW this year. Recall that ODFW is doing a study to assess recruitment of White Sturgeon in John Day Reservoir. Mike indicated that ODFW has installed additional acoustic tag receivers within the broodstock collection area (see Figure 1). Mike stated that some of the receivers (e.g., ST10 and ST11) are located in areas where they collect broodstock. Mike is hoping broodstock collection will not interfere with receivers in the broodstock collection area downstream from McNary Dam.

Laura commented that managers must deal with public perception. That is, the supplementation program is collecting mature adults from John Day reservoir to use as broodstock. Thus, these mature fish are not allowed to spawn naturally in the reservoir. At the same time, over a 10-year period, natural recruitment within the reservoir has been nil (i.e., WDFW captures very few young of the year sturgeon) and there is little to no harvest allowed in the area. This is the same period over which broodstock collection has occurred. She noted that the group may need to consider other locations for collecting broodstock. Mike stated that during broodstock collection, they capture several small, natural-origin White Sturgeon in the reservoir. He indicated that he would share those data with Laura.

Mike Clement asked whether a given female can be used for broodstock more than once. That is, can a gravid female collected and spawned in one year and then recaptured in a future year be used a second time? Both Jason McLellan and Laura Heironimus responded that a geneticist would need to answer that

question. Jason noted that in other programs, to avoid possible genetic risks, they do not use a female more than once; however, those programs have access to several females within the populations.

Cory Kamphaus asked Laura whether WDFW provides presentations and reports summarizing their sampling in John Day reservoir to the PRFF. Laura said she provides reports but not presentations. She said she will continue to share reports with the PRFF.

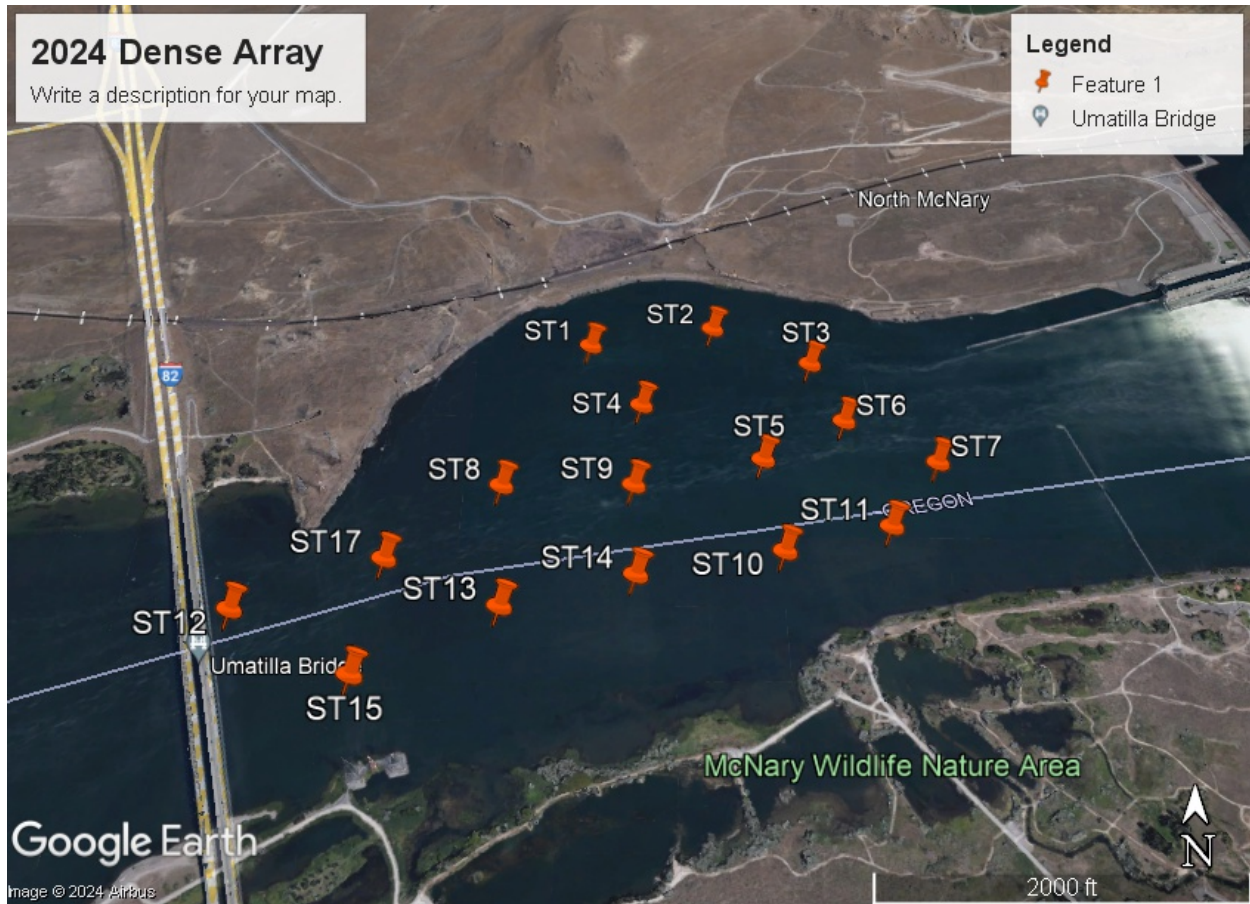


Figure 1. Locations of acoustic receivers in John Day reservoir downstream from McNary Dam.

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

VI. Pacific Lamprey

Juvenile Survival Studies – Ralph Lampman reported that he will continue to update the Upper Columbia Juvenile Source Lamprey Datasheet and will share the spreadsheet with the PRFF soon. He added that it does not appear that a suitable number of natural-origin juveniles can be collected upstream from the project area for a survival study. This means that the PRFF will need to consider the use of artificially propagated (hatchery) fish and natural-origin juveniles collected downstream from the project area (e.g., from the Yakima River).

Ralph described the status of the PNNL juvenile Pacific Lamprey studies that are being conducted at McNary and John Day dams this year. He stated that during the first week of the study, which began at the end of March, PNNL only tagged and released natural-origin juveniles. During the second week, they tagged and released a mix of hatchery- and natural-origin juveniles. About 64 artificially propagated fish

were used in this release. The third week of the study incorporated over 60 natural-origin juveniles collected in the Yakima River. These fish were held at the Yakama Nation Hatchery before they were tagged and released. Because of low flows, source fish for the study has been limited. As flows increase, more juveniles should be available for the study. So far, PNNL has tagged and released about 330 juvenile Pacific Lamprey. Their goal is to tag and release about 1,115 juveniles this year. The study will end in late June or early July.

Tracy Hillman indicated that Ralph Lampman has been coordinating with researchers at PNNL and asked them to give a presentation on their juvenile Pacific Lamprey survival studies to the PRFF, RRF, and ASWG. To accommodate PNNL schedules, the presentation will be given during the PRFF meeting on 5 June at 10:00 am. Tracy and Ralph will work on logistics and Tracy will share this information with the RRF and John Ferguson (Chair of the ASWG).

Grant PUD Adult Trapping Efforts in 2024 – Mike Clement reported that trapping for adult Pacific Lamprey will be similar to last year and will follow the approved SOA. Based on coordination with Douglas PUD, all fish captured during the first four weeks will be provided to Douglas PUD for translocation upstream from Wells Dam. Fish captured during the second four-week period will be transported and released at Kirby-Billingsley Hydro Park upstream from Rock Island Dam. Mike said they will likely begin trapping in mid-July when counts at Priest Rapids Dam are in the double digits. Ralph Lampman asked whether the timing of the 8-week collection period has worked well in the past. Mike responded, yes, and noted that they capture fish across >80% of the run.

Other Pacific Lamprey Items – Tracy Hillman reported that the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative will be holding their Native Lamprey Workshops this year. The goals of the workshops are to raise awareness of native lamprey species and assist participants in incorporating lamprey conservation into restoration projects, including permitting, passage design, in-water work activities, and other considerations. The workshops, which are free, will use both classroom and field instruction to provide participants with knowledge of the ecology, habitat needs, cultural significance, and conservation of lamprey species in the Pacific Northwest. For our region, the workshop will be held in Omak, WA, on 24 and 25 June. Registration is open.

Ralph Lampman reported that the annual meeting of the Pacific Lamprey Upper Columbia Regional Management Unit will occur on 14 May from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. Ralph indicated that members should have already received information regarding the meeting. If not, please contact Ralph.

Mike Clement asked Ralph whether he has any information on the adult Pacific Lamprey forecast at Bonneville Dam for this year. Ralph indicated that it is still too early to have a reasonably good forecast; however, the CRIFC model estimates a run of about 400,000 adults. He added that numbers of adults continue to increase over time.

VII. Adjourn

With no additional business to discuss, Tracy Hillman adjourned the meeting at 11:30 am.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the PRFF will be on 5 June 2024.