

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Cowlitz River Advisory Group

February 28, 2019

Centralia Library, 110 S Silver St, Centralia WA, 98531

Attendance

Cowlitz River Advisory Group Members:

- Anthony Crocco, *Fishermen on the Upper Cowlitz Basin*
- Bob Reid, *The Cowlitz Plan for Restoration*
- Butch Smith, *Illwaco Charter Association*
- Carl Burke, *Northwest Sportsfishing Industry Assoc. and Northwest Marine Trade Assoc.*
- Cody Clark, *Business/ Sport fishing*
- Dan Tudor, *Sports fishermen*
- David Passmore, *Outdoors sport fisherman*
- Don Glaser, *Friends of the Cowlitz*
- Gene Tripp, *Sports fishermen*
- Greg King, *Friends of the Cowlitz*
- Hank Emond, *Sports fishermen*
- Jack Tipping, *CCA*
- James Shinn, *CCA*
- Jon Vigre, *CCA*
- Larry Pryor, *Northwest Fisheries Enhancement*
- Lonnie Goble, *East Lewis County Fishermen*
- Paul Ockerman, *NW Guides and Anglers Association*
- Randy LeDuc, *CCA*
- Rudy Salakory, *Cowlitz Indian Tribe's Natural Resources Department*
- Stan Bartle, *Fishermen on the Tilton*

Tacoma Power:

- Keith Underwood

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Staff:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly Cunningham | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sam Gibbons |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bryce Glaser | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Wadsworth |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Serl | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Myrtice Dobler |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brian Gale | |

Public:

Ryan Johnson

Meeting Agenda

- I. Introductions and opening remarks (~15 minutes)
 - a. Ground Rules reminder
 - b. Finalize Meeting Notes from September 25, 2018
- II. Updates- review handout – Bryce (~30 minutes)
- III. Hatchery Production Options Update (~30 minutes) (Sam/Brian/Bryce)
- IV. FHMP schedule/updates (~15 minutes) (Keith)
- V. Next meeting (~10 minutes) (All)
 - a. Topic List prioritization for next meeting
 - b. Next Meeting date
- VI. Public Comment (~20 minutes)
- VII. Wrap up/adjourn

Meeting Notes

Introductions and Opening Remarks

A few folks were out for various reasons, Kelly Cunningham was pulled away for the legislative session- he apologizes for not being able to be here.

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

Meeting notes were briefly reviewed, no one made comments or edits. There was a discussion on process, some members had received questions on why the previous meeting's notes weren't online. The current process for our meeting notes is to allow members to review draft notes, and finalize notes at the following meeting.

Finalized Meeting Notes from September 25, 2018 will be posted online following the end of this meeting.

Updates – Review of handout Spring Chinook Forecast Fishery

Our forecasted return is lower than the hatchery broodstock need. We are implementing a closure on the Cowlitz River, effective March 1st, with an expectation that the lower Columbia River spring Chinook fishery will be constrained as well to prevent negatively effecting Cowlitz returns.

There was a discussion on in-season management. It was recognized that there is uncertainty in the tributary forecast, and staff will be monitoring the in-season return. This includes:

- Tracking spring 2019 hatchery returns (from now forward)
- Creel surveys on the river will give some information as well.

The Mainstem Columbia runsize update will likely happen in early May. That will assist us in predicting the runsize. As we approach the 50% return to the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery (end of

May /early June) we may have enough information to see if the river can open back up for a fishery.

Chinook - Fall 2018 Egg Takes

Hatchery staff have finished fall egg takes. Shortfalls for fall Chinook were predicted and staff worked to get as close to our program target as possible. For fall Chinook, we did not make target and are about 45% of the overall release goal.

In most places, the overall fall Chinook 2019 forecast is up slightly from last year. We are looking hard at the Cowlitz River return and will make recommendations as the North of Falcon processes goes on.

There was discussion on what to expect with the 2018 shortfall. Any time we are under goal future returns are at risk. The Chinook return includes multiple years, so one poor year doesn't necessarily mean a complete crash of the fishery. There are several factors that will affect returns:

- The amount of fish released
- Ocean conditions- If ocean conditions do improve we may get a fair return
- Fishery management - Ocean/ Buoy 10/ Lower River fisheries catch Cowlitz River fish

Adaptive management and what can be done differently based on predictions was discussed. One challenge is the NOAA ocean conditions stoplight chart doesn't tell us what will happen two to three years out. We are working with a five year average, which can be slow to react if conditions decline quickly. There was a discussion of some of the pros and cons of managing to the pre-season forecast (such as over-harvesting, or having to find alternate locations for surplus fish).

It was suggested this could be part of the FHMP planning.

Coho

This year we did well, and reached 101% of our egg take goal. Currently we don't have any extra fish. The rearing process could change that either up or down. Survival in the hatchery is affected by many factors (temperature, disease etc.) and can result in changes to inventory.

Tilton River Second Release Site

We've been working on developing a second release site. We've identified a potential site at the Bremer Bridge below Morton, and Tacoma Power (TPU) is working on design, permitting and development.

The TPU engineering team thinks they are on track to have the site designed and developed by next fall. Next steps for the TPU team are to determine which permits are required, and have an application meeting with Lewis County.

Bird and Marine Mammal Predation

Most of the authority lies outside of the state or TPU, we rely on federal agency partnerships. Based on new marine mammal bill we expect to have a little more flexibility in dealing with problem animals below Bonneville Dam (including Stellar Sea Lions). We hope to have new sea lion trapping gear by 2020, that can also handle Stellar Sea Lions.

Currently we are unaware of any plans to develop a formal predation management plan specific to the Cowlitz, this maybe a topic for the future. There are things happening to address the predation challenges:

- Cowlitz Trout Hatchery's bird predation contract is moving forward as normal
- Implemented new ways of tracking releases to know how much predation occurred during rearing at the Cowlitz Trout hatchery.
- The current FHMP outlines methods to track predation of natural origin fish by hatchery origin fish released into the Cowlitz. This will be an on-going discussion of the Cowlitz M&E sub-group.

Several ideas to reduce predation were discussed:

- Hazing birds by continued boat traffic to move birds, with river closure boat traffic has reduced.
- Coordination of flows with fish releases to help fish flush to the Columbia. This may not be possible this year with low flows.

Legislative Updates

Bryce will continue to send out emails with links to legislative tracking site. If there are specific questions to various bills let us know and we will get you answers on what we can.

Early Winter Steelhead Hatchery Program Modeling

Staff are working on modeling. In March there's a work group scheduled for FTC to discuss FHMP direction. Hopefully staff will be able to bring back some options.

Hatchery Production Options Update

On November 7th WDFW and TPU met, they discussed a range of short, mid, and long-term options. Currently the mid and long-term options are cost prohibitive, so the group decided to focus on short term solutions, while options for funding potential longer term solutions is pursued.

Even short term options will take time to plan, the timeline could be a year or two out.

- Short-term is 1-5 years out
- Mid-term is 5-10 years out

A second meeting focused on further developing short-term options. Most concepts focused on the finite capacity of hatcheries (for example we cannot increase capacity without infrastructure changes, but can shift the suite of fish and which sizes fish are being raised to.) Some options include additional fish above and beyond the current program, and others grow the same number of fish but release at a larger size. Staff will also be working on modeling some of these options based on our ESA cap.

All the options will cost money, and some potential sources have been identified:

- Cowlitz River spring Chinook have been identified for potential Orca funding
- Possible TPU satellite facilities funding

Staff reviewed four options (in meeting materials) with the Advisory Group, and will bring more details at the next meeting. One of our limiting factors is the over-summering capacity at the hatcheries.

Fish Hatchery Management Plan (FHMP) schedule/updates

This process began about two years ago. This time last year TPU received an extension until February 2019. TPU has since requested an additional year continuance to provide advisory groups and public time to respond. The new submission goal is February 2020.

With the current FHMP, TPU had concerns that the public didn't easily understand what was happening and why. They are currently looking at setting measures of success.

TPU is starting with one species at a time and will bring the chapters together towards the end of the process. Throughout the process they are trying to provide chapters for review. The Chinook chapter is expected to go out for public review in April.

Advisors were invited to the March 5th FTC meeting. This meeting is open to the public and will be from 10-2pm at Veterans Museum in Centralia.

Next meeting

Potential topic list for next meeting

- Bird predation discussion
- More details on short term options
- FTC Steelhead options
- Discussion about Spring Chinook SARs

Action Items

Item	Assigned to
Send ocean condition NOF handout/PPT to group	Tom
Acronym cheat sheet	Myrtice
Send out list of important dates – open FTC meeting NOF meetings, etc.	
Send out email with doodle poll and base topics to talk about, remind advisory members they can send additional topics in	Myrtice
Action plan at the end of meeting- with conclusion?	Myrtice

Next Meeting

We are looking about a month and a half to two months out, end of April or early May. Myrtice will create a doodle poll and send it out.

List of Acronyms

- CRSSE..... Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement
- CRAG..... Cowlitz River Advisory Group
- FHMP..... Fisheries and Hatchery Management Plan
- fpp..... Fish per pound
- FTC..... Fisheries Technical Committee (Cowlitz)
- HGMP..... Hatchery and Genetic Management Plan
- MA BIOP..... Mitchell Act Biological Opinion
- NMFS..... National Marine Fisheries Services
- pHOS..... Proportion Hatchery Origin Spawners
- RSI..... Remote Site Incubator
- TPU..... Tacoma Public Utilities (aka; Tacoma Power)
- UCR..... Upper Cowlitz River