

PUGET SOUND RECREATIONAL FISHERIES ENHANCEMENT OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE MINUTES

MARCH 2, 2010

MEETING CALLED BY	Clint Muns
TYPE OF MEETING	Advisory Group
FACILITATOR	Steve Thiesfeld
NOTE TAKER	Colleen Desselle
ATTENDEES	Clint Muns, Dave Croonquist, Colleen Desselle, Steve Thiesfeld, Polly Fischer, Mike Gilchrist, Theresa Tsou, Jim Jenkins, Rich Eltrich, David Knutzen, and Jon Lee via conference call

Agenda topics

DISCUSSION	Add two topics:	
New business: brief discussion re committee expenses and Voluntary Trip Report (VTR) program discussion.		
CONCLUSIONS	Accepted.	
No negative comments.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
	Colleen Desselle	

DISCUSSION	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
Reviewed.		
CONCLUSIONS		
Accepted as written.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
N/A	Clint Muns	

DISCUSSION	McKernan Discussion	
If McKernan closes, PSRFE is not doing anything. There is a recovery program for steelhead.		
CONCLUSIONS		
There is interest and ideas for the Department to consider in keeping it going.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
	N/A	N/A

DISCUSSION	Lingcod Update	
<p>Late January we released 45 sub-yearlings and did mobile tracking last week and results are pretty much in agreement with sub-yearling release we did about a year ago. The sub-yearlings are showing very little site fidelity and very little interest in reefs. Two and one-half to three days mobile tracking we found 25% of what we released, but none of them close to the release sites. Authenticates fish are moving away. Probably won't see them until about a year later. Moving is not necessarily bad for enhancement, but it complicates the kind of monitoring we want to do when it comes time for larger scale releases. We are going to want to do pretty intense monitoring of test survivals and look for negative impacts on wild fish. Yearlings we released last July and in December – less movement and good use of reefs. Still seeing about twenty percent on reef and they are all pretty close to their release site, and then another 20% of the sub-yearlings we released about 4 months ago, of those we are seeing about half of them on the reef.</p> <p>Clint asked if there were any concerns on site fidelity. We have no data on wild lingcod. Not known where to find them this young. We can find them younger and older.</p> <p>It is unknown whether lingcod may enter the fisheries. Size data indications are that they will enter the fisheries, and it looks like the wands will pick up the acoustic tags.</p> <p>People are planning to collect broodstock connected with DFW rockfish conservation plan. Trying to figure out how to collect rockfish and there are some people down in San Diego that are trying to figure how to use decompression chambers so that they bring up rockfish and put them into the decompression chambers and recompress them and slowly decompress them. We may look into how to do that, and see if we can get some fish to survive. That would be the first step in what we want to do with rockfish here.</p>		
CONCLUSIONS		
<p>Last meeting, we talked about taking a break, but it seems that we are continuing. Gearing up for egg collection in early 2011. Trying to keep the lingcod work going and try to do some larger scale yearling release and associated monitoring for the next couple years in addition to possibly starting up some rockfish work. Possibly, we may be doing some releases later this year of yearlings or try some releases of 2-year olds.</p> <p>We may be able to learn more on this with data on habitat discoveries. Yearling release getting about twenty percent fidelity for larger-scale releases, which is probably good enough concentration to get viable and impacts on wild fish.</p> <p>Is it possible to wand the lingcod? Steve has asked, but still awaiting an answer. They may have a lot more pressure to sample the lingcod and blackfish. Jon can provide diagrams of where tags are implanted. Sub-yearlings have smaller tags.</p>		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Steve is to try to get an answer re: wand for lingcod tags while sampling.	Jon Lee	N/A

DISCUSSION	Status Rockfish Research and Stock Assessment Program Update	
<p>RCW 77.12.702. Prepared RCW and our 2008 report for Legislature. Highlights for RCW: Directed the Department to develop and implement a rockfish research and stock assessment program and we will conduct Puget Sound basin and coastal surveys with new and existing technologies to estimate current abundance and future recoveries of rockfish and the stock assessment and evaluations for potentials of marine fish enhancement. Beginning in 2008, the Department must report every two years on the status of this program. The expenditures on the rockfish research account may be used only for rockfish research including the stock assessments and only the Director or the Director's designee can authorize expenditures on this account.</p> <p>In 2008 we conducted ROV surveys for Puget Sound in the San Juan area (more than 200 transects), and coastal at Cape Flattery area (includes all 6 transects). Dec 2008 report is in (copy provided).</p> <p>Historical rockfish catch reconstruction – commercial landings. Currently have some separate species. Samplers will separate further to establish baseline data – the question was asked: will it have explanation that this is our best estimate?</p> <p>Dave asked about how the licenses are used to come up with figures? Not using licenses for this information, it will be done by actual commercial fish landed. For recreational, we have port samplers inspect landed fish , but it is not part of this effort yet.</p> <p>Jon asked about the rockfish research account. Can we apply for funding in rockfish research? No firm deadlines. If want to do in 2010, you need to communicate this ASAP. (We currently are not soliciting research ideas. Only agency projects.)</p> <p>Dave asked about square meters – how does this translate? What is square feet conversion? 126+m square meters is estimated to be 4.6 square miles. <u>Theresa will go back and confirm the area.</u> Each transect is about 100 meters. [Note: Colleen researched meters to miles and 126000000 meters equals 78292.770 miles.]</p> <p>Video of one of the reef sites (shown). It was always believed that yelloweye rockfish were bottomfish that stay on one rock, but this video has three yelloweye that fend off a lingcod. This lingcod is about 4 feet long and the yelloweye are probably about 2-2½ feet long. This is at about 120 fathoms. It is unsure whether this is an avoidance response or a territorial response as this is the first time we have observed it. There is no documentation of this kind of behavior for rockfish. Coastal</p>		

ROV – we share ownership of one with DNR. It is quite expensive. Smaller one is used for PS surveys; we actually contract with SRI in Florida to do the surveys for us.

We did not budget in staff time to process the videos – 1-hour video equals 6 hours to finalize. We just have preliminary estimates: the San Juans, I only remember the bocaccio because that was exciting because a citing has not been reported for a very long time, and it was estimated to be about 4,000 of them (not observed, but expanded number) with the majority at about 15 to 150 meters. Need to classify the many species observed in the videos. We don't have the staff, time, or budget to complete them all in one year. It would be nice to finish the whole PS in just one year so they can be on the same page, but that is just not going to happen. Juvenile surveys are completed by divers in shallower waters. All of the data that we have, we have shared with NOAA.

Is there any concern that the legislature will cut the funds with that amount of money? It is slated to be used this year, so that will not happen. How much did OFM get from the top? This account has had the overhead waived. How did that happen? I don't know.

CONCLUSIONS

License surcharges – recreational: charter boat captains \$35.00 and for individual anglers \$.50, and commercial: \$35.00 on non-salmon delivery license. Fund balance in January 2010 \$400,000 for the biennium, so about \$200,000 per fiscal year. Since 2008 every year we hold a meeting with the directors to select projects using this fund and project selection criteria for coastal projects is to fill in data gaps to support the Pacific Council's stock assessment groundfish needs. For Puget Sound projects is for establishing tools for conducting stock assessments and long-term monitoring, especially for the three ESA species candidates: yelloweye; canary; and bocaccio.

Four proposed 2010 Projects: 1) Reconstruct historical rockfish catches; 2) Coastal yelloweye rockfish longline survey in collaboration with IPHC; 3) PS continue ROV survey – central Sound and Whidbey basins; and 4) exploring other no-take survey techniques because abundance is very low. This was not done in 2009 because we wanted to establish data to guide us in 2010. We need to explore the "no take" surveys to eliminate mortalities on these species.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Theresa to confirm the square miles rather than meters.	Theresa Tsou	

DISCUSSION Puget Sound Chinook Harvest Management Plan

Submitted plan and we were way behind schedule. Still a number of issues being worked on even though they are still with NOAA and there are discussions going on such as Lake Washington. The biggest issue is that we won't have coverage from the new plan until likely around the first of August. So we have to find a mechanism to get ESA coverage for May, June, and July. Not bad for May and June from any of the non-treaty sectors, but July is really needed. It is believed that Phil stated that NOAA is working with the Department and may have a contingency plan worked out. Yes, there is talk of a Section 7 coverage, but how the law of ESA affects this is unknown to Steve. Outside of the Makah Tribe, there is not a lot of May, June, July fishing so most tribes not happy about providing help. Tribes with terminal U & A are reluctant as they are afraid this may cause the terminal areas to shut down. I think we are moving forward on that. Pat [Pattillo] and Kyle [Adicks] are trying to push through. The main thing is that I wanted you to be aware of the gap in coverage. Dave Croonquist suggested that when developers state that we ought to shut down fisheries for ten years, we suggest they stop development for ten years. What is good for the goose...Some changes, but overall not that different from last year's plan.

Clint stated the basic difference is that we were reducing the encounter rates on Nisqually, Skokomish and was it the Snohomish or the Skagit? So the differences that I am aware of is that Skokomish is going to have an ER, where it had one before – it's 50% and they have been harvesting at about 60%; Nisqually is going to have 3-year ratcheting down from, I think 67 down to 47, and that's a fairly significant change there. Dave Croonquist asked if NOAA provided the side boards that the state has to work under. Steve replied that he thinks they have basically given us some guidance. They have not rejected anything we have provided so far. Dave relayed that what he was getting at is that the state can be more restrictive, but they cannot be more liberal than federal. Can that be done? If not, ask what they are looking for. Steve believes that one consideration is to extend the current plan by three months is one of the options.

Steve Thiesfeld stated that those of whom he talked to assumes that the plan will be litigated by both sides no matter what it says. Development folks and conservation folks will litigate. Even the Lake WA just switches pre-terminal harvest inside the lake. The cap is still 20% for Lake Washington. It is not that additional harvest is allowed, it's just where you are allowed to harvest. It will be easier for us if we selectively target stocks in the lake. The other changes that I am aware of are on the Skagit they have broken out stock each of the stock groups as low abundance threshold. Where it used to be an aggregate for the river it is now a Sauk and Suiattle and major Skagit or something like that. The other thing is on the Stillaguamish where they have north and south fork populations for North fork and a south fork population. Suiattle springs may be the critical stocks, not the spring population as a whole, but that portion of it.

North of Falcon implications – low on Columbia River coho and have a bunch of Columbia River Chinook. Accessing the Chinook is going to be the question while we are protecting coho. Problem is how to hold fisheries. If ocean coho quotas are down, may free up PS coho so that we don't have to take some actions inside, or as drastic actions. Puget Sound stocks we've got Straits coho are an issue, but we're below our ER even though they are in the tank. We have not been harvesting them at a very high rate in the southern U. S. Hood Canal coho is on my radar; we are at a lower rate at 45% down from

60% last year. One of the suggestions that came up today is to move HC to a 2 per bag from 4; should solve some problems. Yes, but if you look at the harvest for last year versus the previous, we were only up 3000 and we did have the 2 bag limit then. In the past, the reduction did not help. Other places we have concerns, we already know that Suiattle spring Chinook is critical status. I don't know what this means for our spring Chinook fishery in the river which is mark-selective. There is fairly heated discussion between Swinomish and upper Skagit on this one. Stillaguamish believed to be critical status. Not sure where Snohomish, mid-HC, Puyallup Dungeness are going to fall out in this. Hood Canal will likely be the candidate as the main driver this year as usual.

Last year's return to Dungeness coho was terrible. This year may be a little better, but still not good. When we are talking about the Dungeness stress it is the Chinook, not coho. Straits coho are a concern; wild coho. The whole ocean productivity turned around. We are not sure what is going to happen with the upwelling. We don't know how well juveniles survived the upwelling. They had a good start, so the thought is that they can go either way this year. Clearly, the ocean has turned back around to less favorable conditions.

Chum in the north are down, both recreational and commercial fisheries will be affected. Sockeye are down at Lake Washington and at Baker. PS Chinook about the same; wild a little smaller, but overall coho were about the same.

Recreational salmon fisheries could affect rockfish with encounters. Will winter blackmouth fisheries be affected? Steve looked at encounter data; broke out into area and gave you the information. I looked at time frame – 80-90% encounters in June-Oct. NOAA looked at salmon fishing – mooching – blackmouth. Encounters much lower in winter than in summer. With data provided, NOAA has since retreated from that position. If commission adopts rockfish restriction and the 120' fathom, will there be other restrictions on salmon fishing? The answer was, no. How to address yelloweye issue if you don't address the depth issues in the San Juans? It is felt that it pretty much puts an end to charter operations for lingcod in the San Juans.

Chinook Harvest Management Plan will get a no-jeopardy call on rockfish; then we can move forward.

No winter (late portion) returns at Puyallup, Nisqually, and Chambers Creek. Not a single return at Chambers. Not known why. Also, take of Humboldt squid and how they may have affected this. If commercial fishery for Humboldt squid, what would the bycatch be? Did stomach analysis on some of the squid; primarily herring, not salmonids.

CONCLUSIONS

ACTION ITEMS

PERSON RESPONSIBLE

DEADLINE

Steve Thiesfeld

DISCUSSION

Meeting Schedule Changes

Proposed change – suggestions for other changes to schedule? December is a difficult month, and March is an absolute killer for me. If could hold in early February (future brood), May (review legislature actions, what the brood document is), late August (egg take issues, budget), and early November (egg takes) would allow me more time to prepare for the meetings. Suggestion to hold meetings around what is happening that we should in tune with such as several meetings during the busy period, and then hold off for a few months when it isn't necessary to have a meeting.

CONCLUSIONS

Set next meeting date to be in late May. May 26 at Wallace Hatchery. Tour begins at 3:00 p.m. Meeting at 5:00.

ACTION ITEMS

PERSON RESPONSIBLE

DEADLINE

Set the meetings for the following year.

Steve Thiesfeld

May 26, 2010

DISCUSSION

Where We Are In Our Current Budget Cycle

- (1) Revenue we've put into account so far. Biennial plan is on left. January 19. Left hand two columns are the plan we put in place. For O9-11it was predicted we will have \$3.46m, which is way higher than our \$2.6m we allotted. Right hand side, Figured by Jan 19, we would have about \$560,000 in the account and we are exceeding that at \$676,000, or 124% of what was forecasted. I am still skeptical that we will be able to maintain that positive variance of funds. We had a lot that contributed to this, but we are probably going struggle to sell licenses this year with the many factors currently going on. Any time we have successful fisheries in place and they are promoted, it will help. Creel checks are showing very few people are out there fishing.
- (2) Used to make our budget decisions, with extra information in the right columns showing allotments and expenditures to through end of January. At our December meeting we talked about shifting PSR funds from Garrison to Hoodspport. You will see this shift in the table. Some of the things do not show up until about the middle of the month or so. Did get in an ALEA grant for Rick's Pond. Indirect waiver charges, we allotted \$91,000 and they charged \$77,000. This is where we stand; it is still early so not currently overly concerned. Looking at agency budgets, it was learned that inter-departmental granting of waivers is not easy to do due to legislative requirements. Did speak with Phil and Joe regarding granting a

waiver for us, but have not had a response as of yet. Overhead does go to our agency, not another agency. Takes care of our business services and administrative staff. Still this is dedicated funds, and feel that we should not have to share with the funds even in the agency.

CONCLUSIONS		
ESB 6444 Section 307. Recreational Fisheries Enhancement state appropriation of \$3.4m. Is that us? We can spend that, but if we don't we don't get to obtain the remainder. We are now at \$2.8m. We will want to make sure we are close to our end of fiscal year targets at the May meeting.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Ensure we are close to our budgets	Steve Thiesfeld	May 26, 2010

DISCUSSION	Voluntary Trip Reporting (VTR) Program	
VTR has loosened. Questions as to the credibility of the program. Are there no requirements for training? Recreational fishing groups to provide training to bring back the credibility? Will take proposal to the board.		
CONCLUSIONS		
Have meeting this Saturday. Department will take care of the criteria needed for the training. Have trained instructors to certify VTR. Will the committee support this concept? It is time consuming going all over the state and talking with several groups. Sense is that the state board will designate someone to coordinate. Flexibility needs to be for the Department staff. Not promising freebies unless we can get donations from sports organizations (not likely). Would it be appropriate for us to fund some products (free or no-cost) to help boost fishing participation? Probably not for this biennium. Need to see how the budget affects us. We need to be conservative.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Support moved and seconded. No opposition.	Clint Muns	
DISCUSSION	Committee Expenses	
Clint Muns is personally troubled with watching the Department struggling with budget issues and we come in and get fed well. I would like to raise for your consideration – where do we cut? Take this into consideration and discuss at next meeting.		
CONCLUSIONS		CONCLUSIONS
Colleen to prepare and provide past expenses report. Committee to decide on whether to cut back.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	ACTION ITEMS
Prepare report. Decide if cut backs are needed.	Clint/Colleen	Prepare report. Decide if cut backs are needed.

OBSERVERS	N/A
RESOURCE PERSONS	
SPECIAL NOTES	