

**Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project**  
**FERC No. 2016**  
**Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee**  
**Final MS Teams Public Meeting Summary**  
January 3, 2023 from 9:30 – 3:30

**FTC Representative Attendees:**

Travis Nelson	TPU
Bryce Glaser	WDFW
Anne Baxter	Ecology
Jonathan Stumpf	TU
James Archibald	NMFS

**Additional Attendees:**

John Serl	WDFW
Peggy Miller	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Sam Gibbons	WDFW
Todd Hillson	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Elliott Johnson	WDFW
Phil Sandstrom	TPU
Chris Foster	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Melora Shelton	TPU
Gabe McGuire	TPU
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Russell Page	LCPUD
Steve West	LCFRB
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

**Public Attendees:** Jack Tipping and Larry Pryor

**2023 FTC Meeting Dates:** February 7, March 7, April 4, May 2, June 6, (No meeting in July), August 1, September 5, October 3, November 7, December 5

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**Approval of December Meeting Summary**

The revised version of the December FTC Meeting Summary was reviewed and approved with clarifying edits and will be posted for public review.

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**Announcements**

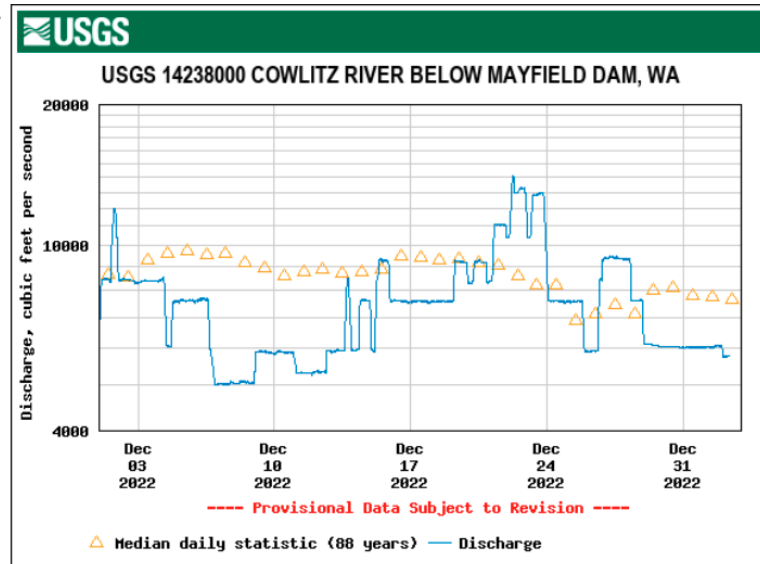
- This is Chris Foster's last day with us as he has accepted a position with USFWS in Orofino, Idaho. His final day at the Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility will be January 27. We appreciate his many contributions and wish him all the best in his new position as he works with the Nez Perce Tribe and supports federal trust responsibilities.

**Updates**

Hydro Operations (presentation emailed before the meeting):

- Inflows: December average daily inflows were 6,976 cfs (75% of the historical average). Inflows increased following a big storm event in late December; January 1 inflows were 11,330 cfs, well above the historical daily average of 9,427 cfs.
- Storage: As of January 2, Riffe Lake elevation was 703' which is more than 25' below historical averages. It is also 5' below what is required to access the boat ramp. This reflects fill since the December minimum of 676.3'. Mayfield continues to operate in its off-season band (420-424').
- Forecast: Snowpack continues to build and is at the 30-year average at Paradise and above average at White Pass. Some precipitation is expected in the next 10 days. Inflows are expected to be 6-8K cfs and outflows are expected to be 5-8K cfs through the week.

### Outflow



Minimum flow 5,000 cfs. No flow or ramp exceedances.

Link to the USGS real-time Cowlitz River hydrograph:

[https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=14238000&PARAMeter\\_cd=00060,00065](https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site_no=14238000&PARAMeter_cd=00060,00065)

<https://www.mytpu.org/community-environment/parks-recreation/river-flows-lake-levels/>

Water Quality/Monitoring: No report at this time.

### Fish Facilities:

Eric reported that December 31 was the last day of operations at Mayfield, and they are now in bypass mode. They just completed the first year of tagging at Mayfield and are anticipating another successful year.

### Separator Collections:

- They have finished spawning cutthroat and are continuing to collect coho brood this month.
- They started brood for winter steelhead on December 1 in an effort to push that run forward per angler requests. They are floy tagging the earliest fish and will prioritize those when doing subsequent spawning in the ponds. Things are slowing down at separator.
- In February they will conduct the regularly scheduled ladder outage which will only require a single day this year.

Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility: Chris reported they plan to restart operations on March 15. There will be a DD with the planned decisions and recommendations for 2023. Tacoma recently learned the maintenance work LCPUD had planned to do this year for the debris deflector that would have impacted the collection seasonal studies will be delayed for another year. Discussions on this are

occurring at the Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group. Tacoma is currently reaching out to contractors and seasonal staff to see if there is a need to advertise to fill vacancies. Chris noted his position is also currently being advertised through the TPU website.

Cispus Release Site: Since the last meeting Laura reported getting an email from Ken Wieman (USFS) saying he had requested a formal proposal on this. Travis reported he contacted his USFS Portland contact who said they had discussed it with their team, and they need to see a modified special use permit from the applicants. Laura noted she looks forward to collaborating with Tacoma and the Forest on this. She recently drove up to the site and observed over 10K cfs at the Cispus gage. These flows made the tail of the gravel bar a lot narrower. At the site there is still a high likelihood that fish would get stranded in the tail-out.

Discussion:

- Are we actively using the site for any proposed alternatives that affect forest lands? Eric responded yes when flows are high enough.
- Bryce expressed appreciation for the separator staff keeping an eye on when flows are high enough to make it accessible.
- 843 coho have been shipped to the Cispus to date.

Spring Chinook Forecast: Josua reported that WDFW is working on the preliminary spring Chinook forecast for the Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis Rivers. They will finalize and distribute the forecast in the next week or so. Roughly 9,000 Cowlitz spring Chinook are forecast to return to the mouth of the Columbia and 8,700 to the mouth of the Cowlitz. This is very encouraging as the hatchery program need is 1,300. Stay tuned. Josua also noted that the lower Cowlitz has returned to permanent rules.

Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group (TWG): No update at this time. See below for Cowlitz Falls North Shore Collector Recommendations.

Monitoring & Evaluation Subgroup: Phil reported the last meeting was cancelled due to scheduling conflicts. The next meeting is scheduled for January 18. Work continues on the monitoring plans.

APR Process for 2023: John and Brian and others will work with Phil on the data gathering meeting to discuss what is needed for the upcoming annual Science Meeting (likely to occur in May/ June). They will meet to discuss this soon and provide a more detailed update at the February FTC meeting.

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## **CF Northshore Collector (CFNSC) Evaluation Recommendations**

**Presenters: Chris Foster and Gabe McGuire**

Chris introduced Gabe McGuire as his counterpart at the Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility. Gabe has been participating in TWG discussions and his input has helped to shape the Decision Document (DD). Chris reminded all the initial draft DD on these recommendations was sent out for a preliminary review on December 20.

Gabe walked everyone through the four actions Tacoma is proposing to improve operations and/or to test hypotheses re: salmon and steelhead Collection Efficiency.

There was considerable discussion around Action 1 which called for developing an agreement with LCPUD to address debris accumulation in front of its unit intakes and trash rack. This agreement will consider timing, frequency, and cost-sharing of the activity.

Discussion included:

- Will this be an ongoing agreement or a one-time thing? The long-term easement agreement with BPA, LCPUD, and Tacoma included a stipulation for developing a mutually agreed upon cleaning strategy and that is part of the conversation. The idea is to look for cost sharing opportunities on an annual basis (vs. every 4-6 years) in order to fund clearing out in front of

the Cowlitz Falls Dam intakes. In the past this has involved hiring a contractor who cleans out the debris and hauls it away in a dump truck. Discussions are ongoing.

- Will there be additional permitting needs if this moves to an annual process? Laura thinks this is covered under their license. Anne thinks the Corps would have to look at that. Does the Dam Maintenance HPA cover removal from in front of the intake of the generators? Peggy suggested Tacoma and LCPUD research this offline. “Follow local permitting requirements for in-water work.”
- Anne: If this becomes a yearly activity, can we call out when / how the FTC is informed for the annual dredging.
- John: Are there plans for doing any acoustic tagging this year since the debris barrier work is being put off until next year? No. LCPUD needs to access the top of the units so they will be pulling out the hatch covers. To access the hatch covers, the spillway flume collection system (Y-sections) need to be removed. This would still impact acoustic studies. There is also the complication of trying to secure the tags, etc.
- Matt B was going to look into secondary collection. Is this still happening? Yes, there is a need to understand the potential need for secondary collection. These discussions are occurring in the technical workgroup.

Next Steps: Gabe and Chris will review the DD and add some clarifying, contextual language as Gabe did on his verbal review of the proposed actions.

#### **Action Items:**

- Gabe: Send out revised DD by January 6 for all to review.
  - John: Send some tech edits for the Background section of the document (asap).
  - All: Review and provide any edits back to Chris and Gabe by January 20.
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#### **Satellite Rearing Program**

##### **Presenter: Phil Sandstrom**

Phil began by reviewing DD 2022-07 with all. Bryce noted the FTC agreed to add two options to the original DD and the timeline has yet to be updated. (Phil updated and reviewed the table along with a clarifying edit with all before the end of the meeting.)

#### **Discussion / Next Steps:**

- Finishing the PPT presentation that details out the two potential locations for satellite rearing and what those programs might look like. This will include the kelt reconditioning information from Chris.
- Presenting the PPT at the February FTC meeting and later that month to the public for input.
  - Hold at a time that is most convenient for members of the public.
  - Bryce suggested also posting the information to the Tacoma website and provide a 30-day public comment period also for those unable to attend the meeting (either virtually or in person).
  - An update on this might also be provided at the APR meeting.
- Present again including public input to the FTC in March/April for final approval.
- Thanks to Peggy for involving Amy Kocourek and Bonnie Shorin from NMFS. Both were generally favorable about the program and discussions are ongoing. They said if we proceed at the EN site, EN would be the host of the site which would be operated by Tacoma, meaning Tacoma would need the consultation with NMFS.

Anne noted potential water quality impacts of the project will require EN to either apply for a 404 or to amend their Water Quality Cert for their project. She has discussed this with them.

## Action Items:

- Phil: Rename the DD as 2022-07A and add "Final." Send out to all. (Done.)
  - Phil: Send the Satellite Rearing presentation PPT out for FTC review no later than Jan. 24.
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## LCPUD Dam Operations

### Presenter: Russell Page

Russell reported high flows just after Christmas (over 17K cfs at Randall and just under 30K at the project itself) caused them to lose about a week of digging in front of the units. The digging has resumed and will finish on January 6. So far, they have removed 180 truckloads from in front of the units. As we move into spring, we will be able to reap the benefits of all that work.

They had a load of water with debris come down the Cispus which took out boat barrier again. Crews will be out to do the repair this week after which they will be able to open up the day use park. Note: Tacoma is actively releasing fish at the day use park.

There are no other updates re: project schedules. They are still awaiting information for 2023-2024 projects that will impact the Cowlitz River basin.

### Discussion:

- Peggy asked if additional sediment occurred in front of the generators during the high flows. They lost some ground – about 8' of what they had dug. They were still able to get the unit up to speed with a low differential. The PUD is looking at doing this on an annual basis – in coordination with other parties.
  - They lost the TDG sensor at the end of the project immediately after fish collection. This will be replaced in the spring.
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## Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery Fund / Habitat and Production (HAP) Subgroup

### Presenters: Melora Shelton and Steve West

HAP Subgroup last met on December 13 to review the most current version of the application materials. The deadline for feedback on these is January 6. The grant round will start in February (aligning with the timing of the LCFRB grant round) with a workshop.

### LCFRB work on the habitat side:

- Steve W reported on the Forest Road 2801 project, proposed by the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and approved by FTC for funding. There is now an agreement in principle for the USFS to take that design project over. This makes sense as it is on USFS land, and the Tribe is understaffed.
- Potential projects for 2023: the USFS has a watershed assessment and restoration strategy for the Upper Cowlitz. They (JD Jones) will be proposing related projects at the LCFRB TAC meeting on January 11.
- Work continues on updating the LCFRB manuals. We believe that the SRFB allocation will be slightly higher than average (~\$4.5 million), but the actual allocation is tied to the state budget, so we will not know the actual funding amount until the budget is final. Also, there are no final dates on the calendar yet. Site visits / virtual tours will be late April-early May.

Melora thanked everyone for their careful review of these materials. The 2023 update to the CRR Implementation Strategy will replace previous versions of the CRR Implementation Strategy. The current update has been reorganized to more clearly describe the CRR Program (appreciation to WDFW for their suggestions), including HAP projects, and approach of parallel grant rounds for

habitat and HAP projects. It also includes substantial updates around benefits to target populations, incorporates updated HAP guiding principles, and addresses at a high level the approach of parallel grant rounds leading to a single FTC funding determination. Melora noted she anticipates this implementation Strategy will need to be updated going forward as needed.

Discussion:

- What were the additions to the list of project elements/activities ineligible for reimbursement or match?
  - Construction of buildings or indoor facilities (habitat projects only)
  - Operation or construction of fish hatcheries (habitat projects only)
- Can HAP projects be located away from the river in the Lower Basin? Might some potential projects be limited by this restriction?
  - There was agreement to flag this for the FTC to consider in the future.

**Action Item:** Steve W to send out description of USFS' two Watershed Restoration Action Plans (WRAPs) along with link to January 11 CLFRB TAC Meeting.

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### **Public Comment Period #1 - Agenda related**

Larry:

- Notification Process: The email distribution list needs to be updated to include Larry. Travis apologized for the oversight and will update the list.
- CRR Program - HAP: How is Tacoma recruiting for potential projects? Travis noted they are using the list they have for prospective projects and welcome suggested additions.
- Wild coho retention: Last October, Larry sent an email to Bryce on this, and subsequently emailed Travis and Matt B. When will fishermen be allowed to retain wild coho? Section 6 of SA identifies the reason for this. Is this a funding issue for WDFW? Can Tacoma help? Travis: WDFW is the fish manager. Tacoma has some limitations on what they can do. Bryce: WDFW's current permitting structure from NOAA Fisheries doesn't allow for retention of NOR fall Chinook or coho. The steps and information needed to update this permit is outlined in the FHMP Transition Plans, e.g., life cycle modeling to determine what constitutes harvestable surplus. WDFW is seeking state general funding to update all lower and upper Columbia permits. While funding was not included in the Governor's budget, they are hoping it might be added back in as the legislative session continues. WDFW would appreciate public support for this. Tacoma is helping as Transition Plans call for more robust life cycle modeling which will provide much needed information. WDFW is hoping to expand opportunity through updating this permit and entering consultation with NMFS. Phil: For future FTC meetings, we will add more time for the M&E Team report so more information on this can be shared.

Jack:

- Public comments in FTC Meeting Summaries: Will there be a chance to review these before the notes are finalized to ensure comments are correctly captured? Travis agreed that coming up with a process to ensure this is important and will work to address this.
- CRR Program – HAP: Is it true that matching funds are not required for hatchery programs in the lower river? Melora affirmed that while encouraged, there is no match requirement for any CRR program grants (HAP or habitat).

## Topics for February 7, 2023 FTC Meeting

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities
  - LCPUD Cowlitz Falls Dam Operations
  - Update on Cispus Release Site
  - Satellite Rearing PowerPoint and Next Steps
  - Downstream Adaptive Management TWG
  - CRR Fund / HAP Subgroup
  - M&E Subgroup
  - 2023 APR Process
  - Preview March FTC Meeting topics – Appropriate to meet in person?
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## Public Comment Period #2 – Any Topic

Jack:

- Concern re: Lack of boat access on Riffe Lake when lake levels are down. Triploid rainbow trout are looking really good right now.
- Anglers report cutthroat fishing was relatively poor (though many returned to the Separator).
- Fall Chinook Spawning Survey in 2021 was new methodology. Was it repeated for 2022? (Yes. More on this at the Science Meeting in May.)

Larry:

- Inconsistency between WDFW and Tacoma escapement reports. Release numbers are hard to find. (Best data source comes out at the annual Science Meeting. WDFW and Tacoma both want to improve the way the data are reported / shared with the public.
  - Congrats to hatchery folks on another great return of Coho to the Cowlitz.
  - Columbia River buy-back program (Bryce can get Larry a contact for this if he would like).
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## Meeting Evaluation

- Good participation – happy to have all voting FTC members present
  - Got two Decision Documents approved. That represents a lot of work!
  - Thank you, Jack, and Larry for attending
  - Josua's quote for the new year: "What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from." T.S. Eliot
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## Closing Remarks

Travis thanked everyone for their time and energy at today's meeting. He looks forward to being able to meet in person, with a hybrid option, when it is appropriate to do so, especially as this is preferred by members of the public. He will also update Tacoma's public website to facilitate public access to these meetings.

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## Parking Lot

- Presentation by Tacoma's Power Management Group and/or from Grant PUD re improving SAR
- Review Steelhead Kelt Recycling Program