

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final Conference Call/GoToMeeting Summary
January 5, 2021 from 9:30 – 2:30

FTC Representative Attendees:

Travis Nelson	TPU
Bryce Glaser	WDFW
Carol Serdar	WA Dept. of Ecology
Scott Anderson	NMFS

Additional Attendees:

James Archibald	NMFS
Rich Turner	NMFS
John Serl	WDFW
Peggy Miller	WDFW
Sam Gibbons	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Jim Pacheco	WA Dept. of Ecology
Matt Bleich	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Phil Sandstrom	TPU
Tim Hoffnagle	TPU
Chris Foster	TPU
Gabe McGuire	TPU
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Steve West	LCFRB
Kate Day	USFS
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Bill Sharp	Yakama Indian Nation
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

Attending Members of the Public:

Larry Pryor, Chris Vandenberg, and Greg King

2021 FTC Meeting Dates: Feb. 2, Mar. 2, Apr. 6, May 4, June 1, July 6 (tentative), Aug. 3, Sept. 7, Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Dec. 7

Approval of Last Meeting Summary

The December FTC meeting summary was approved with edits and will be posted to the FTC public website.

Updates

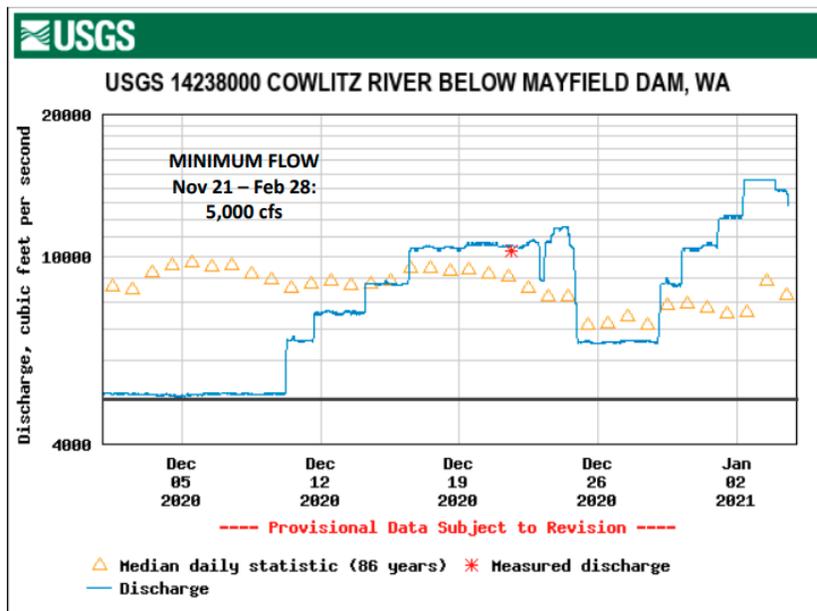
Hydro Operations:

- Inflows: After typical inflows from September – October, December inflows at 7.6K cfs were lower than the historical average of 9.4K cfs. There were lower precipitation and snow levels in December as well. The first few days in January brought winter

rains and snow contributing to a daily inflow of 23K cfs on January 3. So far, the daily average for this month is 15.6K cfs, far above the historical daily average of 9.4K cfs. Inflows are expected to drop close to 9K cfs in the next few days.

- Storage: The Riffe Lake elevation had been a bit above the historical average of 732'. On January 4 it had risen to 736'.
- Snowpack is starting to build and is above average at both Paradise and White Pass (in line with La Niña pattern).
- Mayfield Outflows: The current outflow is ~11.7K cfs. The minimum flow of 5,000 cfs will continue through the end of February. There are no minimum flow exceedances or ramp events to report.
- Forecast: Typical precipitation and snow levels are expected over the next ten days. Freezing levels are 3K – 6.5K'. Inflows will likely be 9K cfs by the weekend.

Outflow



No minimum 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

Water Quality/Monitoring: Carol noted that Ecology is in the process of reviewing the Water Quality Plans received from Tacoma Power. Ecology is seeking reasonable assurance that water quality standards (and the 401 Water Quality Certification) will be upheld during Barrier Dam construction, so through the review of the Water Quality Protection Plan she noted that typically in construction projects, specifying too much detail results in many change orders and cost increases. If the contractor is permitted to use the 1,000 cubic yards of gravel to create the coffer dam and reuse it from year to year vs. using it as gravel augmentation, they may choose the one that costs less. This gravel will be trucked in on the left bank which adds to the cost of the importation of gravel. She reminded all that the location of the placement of the gravel (as part of the gravel augmentation plan, on barrier island) should be specific and not be left to the contractor's discretion. The specifics to the means and methods should be addressed soon. Matt assured her Tacoma's intent is to place gravel on an annual basis. Carol is also looking forward to learning who the new PM is for the Kosmos clean-up project.

Fish Facilities: Eric reported this is a slow time of year for adult returns, primarily Coho along with a few winter Steelhead. All egg takes look good for fall programs. The Mayfield juvenile collector was shut down for the season the end of December and will be in bypass mode until April 1. Operations at the Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility concluded October 20 and will start back up on March 15.

Trout Hatchery Remodel Project: Tacoma is currently advertising for a lead biologist for this project. After this person is hired, Tacoma will work on developing the design criteria and then select a design firm for the project.

Satellite Rearing: Matt reported the public review period ended December 21. He is in the process of consolidating these comments, along with those from the FTC and others throughout the region. These may be worked through in an FTC workshop. Options will be revisited and there will be an update on the status of this plan in the next few months.

CRR: Travis explained he has been engaged in discussions with Steve Manlow of the LCFRB about the CRR. The focus moving forward is on how best to improve based on lessons learned from the initial grant round. Tacoma anticipates advertising requests for grant projects proposals the end of 2021, with public outreach occurring in the June/July timeframe.

2021 FTC Work Plan

Presenter: Travis Nelson

Travis projected an initial high-level draft of what the 2021 FTC Work Plan might look like. He reminded everyone that this is an initial draft, and he welcomes feedback on these three tables. This plan can be combined with the FTC protocols. He envisions us refreshing the tables in January and July of each year. He looks forward to integrating feedback and proposing an updated version for approval in the coming weeks. Discussion highlights:

Table 1: FTC Meeting Topics

- Several items on the table are monthly updates. (Hydro Ops, Fish Facilities, etc.) Should all these be added to the list as well?
- Consider putting the non-monthly topics in a separate table.
- Add context for FTC members for each topic so they can be better prepared.
- Maybe split the table into annual activities vs. 2021 activities.

Table 2: FTC Committee Reviews

- Shows reports coming to the committee for review along with due dates to FERC.
- Add the year the next report is expected (e.g., woody debris is every 10 years).

Table 3: Public Meeting Location

- The current thought is to have three public meetings this year. January, June, and December, then February/March instead of January in 2022.
- Schedule the APR review meeting to coincide with one of the public meetings.

He also reminded all that he had emailed the Cowlitz Article 3 Report for 30-day review with comments due to him and Melora by February 4.

Action Items

- All: Send comments on the Work Plan to Travis by January 15.
- Travis: Integrate comments into a new draft plan and send out for review and possible approval at the February meeting.

Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group

Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt reported the November and December meetings were combined into a single meeting on December 9. The main topic was preparation of the Cowlitz Falls Northshore Collector Decision Document 2021-2 for this FTC meeting which was emailed out to all for review on December 24. He walked through the seven specific actions the group is recommending to the FTC for this year. These actions are intended to test theories about salmon and steelhead collection efficiency related to the CFNSC configuration, dam operations, and life history strategies. These recommendations have all been discussed at prior FTC meetings so no surprises. He also noted that this will likely be a low abundance year for Spring Chinook. PIT-tagging for efficiency evaluation may further reduce abundance. Discussion highlights:

- Increasing inflow within the collector from 500 to 750 cfs during spring freshets: existing screens do not allow increasing flows to 1,000 cfs.
- Being cognizant of Water Quality Protection Plans when doing the debris management evaluation study.

Decision Document 2021-2 was approved by consensus as written and there was great rejoicing.

Action Item: Matt to send the approved Decision Document to Travis to distribute.

Gravel Augmentation

Presenter: Travis Nelson

Travis walked us through the Gravel Augmentation Long-Term Decision Document 2021-1 that was sent for review on December 17 and again with a few slight revisions on January 4. He reminded all that this was the long-term version of the plan that was requested at prior meetings. This DD is intended to capture what's happened to date with a commitment to what's happening in the future – includes Barrier Dam project and gravel bar downstream.

Discussion highlights:

- Appreciation to Melora for providing the Framework and History section of the DD.
- It is important to include milestones for the long-term strategy and what exactly is will include. Need specific goals and the strategies to achieve them.
- There have been several DDs on this that assure Tacoma's commitment is to put gravel in place.
- It would be helpful to provide folks more time for additional comment.
- Matt talked with Matt Peter during the break and was assured of Tacoma's intent to place gravel during the construction period. They want to leave flexibility for the contractor to reuse a portion of the gravel that is used for the coffer dam. River conditions during construction may not allow them to place the gravel at the prescribed location. The 500 cubic yards of material done by the contractor is independent of the supersack materials. If there is annual shortfall from the supersacks, Tacoma will ensure 500 cubic yards of gravel is placed in the river for years 2021-23. The quantity is specified as is the place, as per the WQPP for the barrier dam activities. Carol noted Ecology wants assurance that the gravel augmentation placement will be accounted for, below the barrier dam and not if the supersacks rip upstream of the dam. Any volume lost above Barrier Dam should not be added to the gravel augmentation volume. This DD provides for gravel

augmentation for the next three years, and that a plan will be developed during the same timeframe. Carol wants to see a real gravel augmentation plan not just the calculations on what might happen in the future. She wants assurances that gravel will be placed below Barrier Dam for the next three years.

- The Barrier Dam Project is an opportunity to try to get more rock in the river and Tacoma is committed to doing this. They are also committed to augment gravel in sites that provide the best opportunities.
- Carol suggested that Tacoma consider again forming a subcommittee to help with the writing of a plan.
- If 500 cubic yards can't be reached with the super sacks, would Tacoma make up the difference? Travis responded yes, if they can't do the augmentation at Barrier Island, Tacoma will make it up within the allotted reach.
- How to account for the amount of gravel the contractor can recycle from Barrier? Can the 11-mile-long reach be tightened up by the FTC? The plan approved by FERC identifies the 11-mile reach. Jim suggested the DD language be changed to "downstream" instead of the 11-mile reach downstream of Barrier Dam.
- Ecology wants to have someone observing the contractor when augmentation occurs downstream of the dam.
- We had a DD for the Barrier Dam Project that says up to 1K cubic yards were to be placed annually. WDFW wants assurance that at least 500 cubic yards are placed.
- For accountability add "by when" to the tables.
- Add footnotes showing where the gravel was placed,
- other edits to the DD were provided by Ecology and WDFW but the edited versions were not shared during the meeting.

Ecology expressed concern about Tacoma's plans to remove the natural gravel recruitment to the Cowlitz River, where the landslide deposited material adjacent to the boat ramp at Mill Creek below the Barrier Dam. Ecology believes that gravel as a result of a natural process should be left in the river. This natural recruitment below the Barrier Dam has occurred in the same location that had been targeted for gravel augmentation. Travis will provide Ecology an audience to further discuss the issues related to removing gravel from the river within a few feet of where gravel was proposed to be augmented.

Action Items

- Travis: Send out revised DD by Jan. 8 highlighting additions from feedback at this meeting.
- All: Send additional comments back to Travis by January 18 so he can integrate them into the DD we review and hopefully approve at the February FTC meeting.
- Travis: Follow up with Carol about her concerns related to natural recruitment of gravel.

FHMP: Next Steps

Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt thanked those who participated in the Fall Chinook Transition Plan Workshops on December 16 and 23. The next meeting will be January 6 to discuss triggers and transition timing, as well as harvest. They will also meet on January 13 to resolve any remaining items. They are drafting an initial cut of bio-programming and tagging needs for fall Chinook. The FTC is invited to participate in the approximately twice monthly workshops to develop the transition plan .

The transition plans are about making concepts actionable. Though the FHMP allows for 1-2 years (depending on the population) to complete the plans, Matt explained they are on track to get everything done this year, using, and modifying as needed, the plan template they developed. They are currently about halfway through the fall Chinook workshops. The initial focus has been on marking and escapement for fall Chinook. The last workshop was on the adult brood source collection plan. At the end of the month, they will do a process check to see what to change for other species based on lessons learned from fall Chinook. They will start on Winter Steelhead in early February.

	A	B	C
1	Workplan - Fall Chinook Transition Plan		
2	Task	Responsible	Dates
3	Discuss and Finalize Workplan	FTC	11/3/2020
4	Develop Workshops	FTC	11/3/2020
5	Develop Draft Transition Template	Tacoma/FTC	11/17/2020
6	Finalize Draft Transition Template	FTC	12/8/2020
7	Workshop on marking and escapement	FTC	week of 12/16/20
8	Adult Collection plan (i.e. brood source)	FTC	week of 12/16/20
9	Workshop on trigger points/transition timing	FTC	week of 1/4/21
10	Workshop on Bioprogramming needs	FTC	week of 1/11/21
11	Workshop on harvest	FTC	week of 1/18/21
12	Schedule reality checkin	All	1/31/2021
13	Draft final of Fall Chinook Transition Plan	All	2/2/2021
14	Winter Steelhead Transition Plan	All	2/1/21 - 2/28/21
15	Spring Chinook Transition Plan	All	3/1/21 - 4/15/21
16	Coho Transition Plan	All	5/1/21 - 6/15/21
17	Combined review of Transition Plans	FTC	7/1/21 - 7/31/21
18	Solicit public input on Transition Plans	Public	8/1/21 - 9/1/21
19	Edit Transition Plans (as necessary)	FTC	10/1/21 - 10/15/21

Matt will continue to send related materials out weekly after each meeting and welcomes any feedback or concerns along the way. Bryce agreed that they are making good progress despite the holidays.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Subgroup

Presenter: Phil Sandstrom

Phil reported that at their last meeting on December 16, the primary focus was on:

- SP Chinook SAR project
- SH weir site selection (TPU will be funding the weirs)

They will discuss the adult handling protocol at a future meeting. Phil sent out the notes from this meeting for all to review. Discussion highlights:

- These are adult weirs and do not affect the outmigration of smolts.
- John reported no dead smolts have been observed on the weirs. Even Steelhead smolts (12") can easily move through the weirs without getting impeded.
- Josua has seen out-migrating smolts easily pass through the pickets which have at least a 1- and 3/8-inch gap between them. He has also observed smolts use the weirs as protection from predators.

Phil reminded all that this group continues to welcome ideas of presentations on topics of interest to the FTC. Their next presentation to the FTC will likely be in April.

Action Items:

- All: Get presentation suggestions to Phil before their next meeting on January 20.
- Phil: Plan to make the next M&E Subgroup presentation available to the public.
- Phil: Send invite to next analytics meeting to FTC members.

Potential Topics for February 2 FTC Meeting

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities, Satellite Rearing Update, Downstream Adaptive Mgt. TGW
- TPU Flow Planning Presentation (?)
- LCFRB Presentation (45 min?)
- CRR
- 2021 FTC Work Plan
- FHMP Transition Plans
- M&E Subgroup (Spring Chinook SAR?)
- Gravel Augmentation Work Plan (revised high-level DD?)
- Preview March FTC Meeting topics

Public Comment Session (*FTC responses appear in italics.*)

Chris Vandenberg:

Open up all virtual FTC meetings to the public? Every six months is not enough, especially if they can't make a meeting.

Travis appreciated this suggestion and will discuss this internally. Currently there are three meetings tentatively scheduled in 2021 for public participation. He will also reach out to the Cowlitz River Advisory Group and a few others who asked to be put on the list.

Great Cutthroat returns! Are all 6K cutthroats going into the broodstock program?

Note: The 2020 adult cutthroat disposition was misreported during the meeting. Eric has since clarified that adults show as being sent to broodstock as these were the only available locations to place them until they could be transported. Adults that were not needed for broodstock were either recycled downstream (majority) or culled after the spawning season. We had some excess Cutthroat Trout juveniles, as we did last year, and due to space limitations, planted them in Riffe Lake again. No adults were sent to Riffe.

Bryce noted a few groups were recycled early on before the decision was made about how to deal with the abundance.

Satellite Rearing: Was disappointed there wasn't an opportunity to participate in the scoping meeting. He has since submitted written comments asking for clarification about why some options were included and others excluded. He has discussed this with Matt and understands that it's a long process. Still, he strongly suggested the options in the scoping document be reconsidered.

Matt assured Chris he did receive his written comments. He hasn't distributed any of the comments yet. He reassured all that we are still in a very early part of Phase 1 of this process and there will be continued opportunities to provide comment.

Larry Pryor:

Why the cutthroat success? Fishing pressure?

We don't know at this point. Chris noted there was good press in the Centralia Chronical and many took notice. WDFW also advertised the strong fishery. This was an example of great collaboration. Matt also noted they made some tweaks at the hatchery. It is unclear if/how these may have impacted the fishery.

He goes to mytpu.org website every Monday to look at the fish return graphs. Wild Steelhead, Coho, and Chinook seem to be doing better than their hatchery counterparts. There is a higher adult survival ratio from fish from the Upper Basin than the hatchery fish.

Public FTC meetings: He has observed public participation seems to be waning in these FTC meetings as well as the CRAG meetings. The perception is that FTC meetings are exclusionary and is disappointed there are only three members of the public at this meeting.

Travis agreed with the observation that public participation is waning. He cannot account for the reason. Maybe they have found these meetings to be less than exciting.

Who is replacing Paul Sparks? Does it have to be someone from TU or American Rivers? Not all signatories are also FTC representatives.

Travis confirmed that Paul has stopped attending the meetings but is still monitoring things electronically. The SA calls for one representative of an environmental group. We anticipate getting a replacement from TU. Peggy clarified that not all signatories of the SA are the voting members of the FTC.

Climate change impacts on water flows: Climate change is real and will impact flows and timing of hatchery releases and other issues related to hatchery management. Is this being accounted for in adaptive management planning?

There is a natural relationship between Tacoma's power/water management and the fish-related departments. Tacoma is taking climate change into consideration in their planning processes. In the meantime, we are fortunate that the Cowlitz River has lower water temperatures than other rivers in the state.

Are assessments of fish health being done prior to releases out of the hatchery certifying fish are healthy?

Yes, a WDFW pathologist performs that assessment. Tacoma also provides fish transport flows between March and June (when most fish were released).

Greg King:

Gave kudos to TPU for their diligent work on the collection facility at Cowlitz Falls. 11K Coho is something to celebrate! He noted this all started with Project Genesis back in the 1990s. Much credit goes to Bob Reid, Dave Becker and John Squires. These HORs are helping with recovering. This is important and should be recognized publicly.

Yes, this has been a success and is the result of hard work and collaboration by many, including the BPA, who built the original Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility and started the original reintroduction program.

Doesn't like the lack of concern for tributaries below the Barrier Dam. They seem to be in bad shape. It is important to recover NORs in whole system – not just the Upper Watershed.

John is optimistic about the fish in the lower river also. There have been up to 14K NOR (wild) Coho returning to Cowlitz tributaries below the Barrier Dam. There is good habitat there also. 2K Coho went to the Tilton and over 8K to the Upper Cowlitz. This is great and there is still room to improve.

There are 14 years left on the current SA. It will soon be time to submit another FHMP to FERC. This should be something that's done between WDFW and Tacoma - not the whole FTC. It's frustrating that this process has become so incredibly lengthy.

Matt reported the FHMP was submitted to FERC last October and included expanding the revision cycle to every ten years instead of every six years. This should help.

It would be good to add a member of the public to the FTC. They care about the Cowlitz River and its future for now and future generations.

Net Pen project at Mayfield Lake? This would alleviate some of the frustration on the part of the public. This is something that could be done in the near term. He suggested locating it across the road from the Mossy Rock Trout Hatchery.

Matt assured Greg this is in the plan and asked for additional feedback from Greg on this.

Greg concluded his comments by stating his appreciation for the Chum piece in the FHMP.

Meeting Evaluation

- Appreciated the break music
- Great attendance and participation was good
- Good time management
- Nice to have extra time at the end (ended at 2:30 instead of 3:30)
- Keep the AM and PM breaks
- Nice flow to the meeting
- Folks were appreciative of each other's contributions
- Participation was well balanced
- Quotable Quote: "You don't have to be perfect to help people. All you have to be is real." Trent Shelton

Parking Lot

- Presentation by Tacoma's Power Management Group
- Review Steelhead Recycling Program