

**Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project**  
**FERC No. 2016**  
**Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee**  
**Final Meeting Summary**  
November 7, 2023 from 9:30 – 2:30

**FTC Representative Attendees:**

Travis Nelson	TPU
Anne Baxter	Ecology
Bryce Glaser	WDFW

**Additional Attendees:**

Peggy Miller	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
John Serl	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Kristopher Warner	WDFW
Todd Hillson	WDFW
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Scott Gibson	TPU
Melora Shelton	TPU
Steve Manlow	LCFRB
Denise Smee	LCFRB
Michael Boyles	BPA
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Joe First	LCPUD
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Katie Buchan	USFS
Stephen Lewis	BIA
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

**Public Attendees:** Michael Deckert

**Remaining 2023 FTC Meeting Date:** December 5: In person (with remote option) at Veterans Memorial Museum in Chehalis

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**Approval of October Meeting Summary**

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

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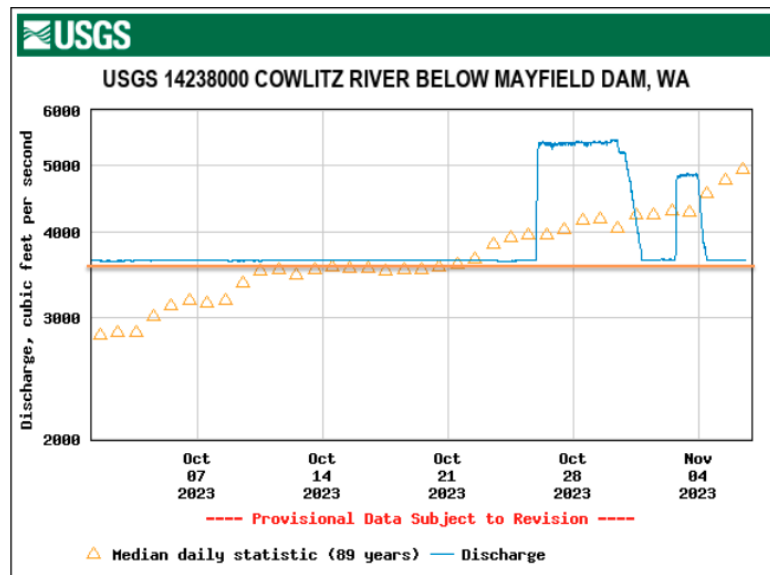
**Updates**

**Hydro Operations – Melora (presentation emailed on November 6)**

- Inflows: October daily average flows were 1,769 cfs (64% of the historical average), despite 5" of rain (also less than normal). November is at 5,456 cfs (75% of average): absolute and relative inflows have increased with fall weather.
- Storage: Riffe's current elevation is 696' (~23' lower than the 2017-2022 average), up from a low of 692'. The Mossyrock long lane remains closed.

- Outflows: Maintained discharge at ~3.6K cfs since September, except during cold and to manage side flows. Minimum outflow of 3.5K cfs from October 1. Ramping limits are now 2 inches/hr both day and night
- 10-day Forecast: Typical temperatures with 3-4 inches of rain, freezing levels 3,500-5,000 ft. Outflows around 3.6K cfs unless there are high side flows. Inflows should be 9K cfs and then drop down to 4-5K cfs.

### Outflow



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/>

Question re. Riffe flood control curve: Currently about 758 ft, decreasing down to 745.5 ft by the end of November.

### Water Quality/Temp Data

Prior to the meeting Matt sent out water temperature data associated with the following locations:  
 Lake Scanewa Water Temperature Data associated with the following locations:

- Boat Barrier Array
- Debris Deflector North
- Debris Deflector South
- Scanewa Boat Launch
- Copper Canyon

Matt reviewed the temp monitoring in Scanewa. Per Peggy's question about these data being based on 15-minute readings vs. "daily means" Matt thanked her and said he will doublecheck and have this corrected.

Anne B noted the FTC has been requesting the inclusion of other water temperature data that Tacoma is collecting along the system, including further downstream. Matt responded that this information is provided in weekly updates. Anne indicated it would be helpful if this information could be provided in the monthly reviews at FTC meetings. Matt noted additional temp data is collected at the hatchery. Water temperatures are recorded during releases on hand written logs and are reported

at the end of the year in an annual report. Tacoma doesn't have another avenue set up to share this more frequently. There is an administrative lift associated with providing these data in multiple ways.

Josua supported Anne's request noting temperature matters for eggs in the gravel, spring Chinook in the lower river, while incubating. This ties in with other species and impacts emergence and predation. Peggy acknowledged it will take Tacoma time to put these data together. However, it will take time for the FTC to seek out the information in multiple sources. Both WDFW and Ecology would really appreciate a one stop shop for these data.

#### **Action Items:**

- Matt: Clarify that "daily mean" is illustrated in the release location figure and that the data are based on 15-min readings, with min and max values listed below the figure being based on 15-min min and max data for transparency. Redistribute the temp report.
- Matt: Put together a list of where Tacoma currently collects temp data and relative associated depths (surface or actual depth) for each.
- Travis: Set up a Teams call with interested FTC members to review and assess whether there are data communication gaps from a regulator standpoint, and how best to disseminate this information.

#### **Fish Facilities**

##### **Separator:**

- Coho numbers have dropped off over the last couple of weeks at the separator. The biggest week this year for coho was the week ending on October 15 with a little over 8,400 coho returns. Last week we had 3,267 coho adults and jacks.
- Coho Jack numbers continue to be high. There have been 26,737 (62%) coho adult returns and 16,550 (38%) jack returns. The highest return of jacks is with the upper Cowlitz Hatchery Program (Ad + CWT) with 45% of the return are adults and 55% are jacks.
- The release goal for HOR coho to the Tilton River is 12,000 adults for the season. A schedule was developed so the coho are released throughout the season rather than all of them at the beginning. By the end of this last week there have been 7,646 HOR adults sent to the Tilton River. The goal by the end of last week was 8,100. With the drop in returns last week, the Tilton release goal for that week was slightly behind.
- Tacoma staff continues to work a 7-day work week. This could change in the next couple of weeks if separator returns do not increase.

##### **Broodstock Collection:**

Tacoma is currently collecting fall Chinook, coho, and cutthroat trout for broodstock. By the end of last week:

- Coho collection is on schedule.
- Fall Chinook are way behind.
- All HOR cutthroat are collected for broodstock and all NORs are sent upstream.

##### **Mayfield Counting House:**

- All Chinook and coho are getting snout tagged and all steelhead and cutthroat are getting a dorsal sinus tag.
- We are seeing coho jacks and adults and fall Chinook adults from the tagging efforts at Mayfield returning to the Separator.

- Numbers at the Mayfield Counting House are slightly lower than the average for this time of year. There were not a lot of fall Chinook adults released to the Tilton last year so the current outmigrant numbers are not too surprising
- The auto flush is occurring twice a week.

### Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility

The final fall block was completed October 27. The facility is now offline for the remainder of the year.

- Fall blocks accounted for about 1.5% of total smolt collection but comprised about 7.4% of total Chinook smolt collection.

Season smolt totals (all age classes):

- Coho: 171,901
- Steelhead: 9,539
- Chinook: 43,090
- Cutthroat: 847
- Total: 225,377

Staff are finalizing data sets this week for delivery to the consultant so they can generate an annual report and findings.

### Satellite Rearing

This project is on hold until further conversations occur with regulators.

### Disease Management Plan

The 5-year Article 8 Cowlitz Disease Management Plan was sent out to the FTC for a 30-day review. No comments were received, and the Plan has been submitted to FERC. Eric hopes it can be posted to Tacoma's website. Anne is hoping for an opportunity to have some dialogue on this. Perhaps a presentation to the FTC? Or the next Science meeting? Peggy noted in Cushman, there are brief presentations of what to expect in annual reports before they come out. She finds this to be very helpful. Travis noted it would be difficult with Tacoma's current staffing levels. What Tacoma has done and continues to do is extend the timeline for reviewers as needed.

**Action Item:** Travis to follow up with Eric and Matt on the Disease Management Plan discussion.

### Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Remodel

Eric started by reminding everyone of the Master Plan from 2018. After COVID, etc., the plan needed to be redone. Tacoma will interview consultants for Phase 1 starting tomorrow. There is a project manager and a new owners rep. Phase 1 will include: refreshing the Master Plan, bio reprogramming, initial permitting, Section 106, ground water studies, full facility site survey and hydraulic model, and robust alternatives analysis allowing Tacoma to determine the best places to invest money for a strong return on investment (ROI). At the end of Phase 1, which should be complete in two years, they should be at 10% design indicating the final scope of what, how and when the hatchery will be improved.

It was noted it seems like a long time to yield a mere 10% design. Eric reiterated the extent of this initial phase and added that HDR's original estimate for the cost of the entire program tripled after the pandemic, supply chain shortages, staff changes, etc. Bryce asked to see a schedule and where the FTC will plug into the process. WDFW contributed a lot to the 2018 Master Plan. Eric agreed, saying next steps will include Consultants describing how they see the process unfolding. They would also develop a Project Management Plan and Communications Plan to present to the FTC.

### Cispus Release Site (Tom Music Bridge)

Laura reported that USACE requested additional information and LCPUD is working through the list of things and will respond to the Corps in the next 20 days or so. Current discussions with the Corps revolve around the temporary fix and don't include the other side of the river. Part of the open dialogue that is ongoing is clarifying with the Corps how they want the USFS to be more involved. Bryce thanked Laura, recognizing all the work to try to get this done. Transport plans and implementation plans are compromised if we don't have this release site. He hopes the PUD will let the FTC know if there is anything the FTC or any of its members can do to help support this effort.

### Monitoring & Evaluation Subgroup

Bryce noted this group hasn't met for a while. When an M&E issue arises (e.g., Chinook broodstock collection), the group works to address it offline/ through emails. If email resolution is not possible, then an ad hoc subgroup meeting can be convened. Another recent issue had to do with coho jack transport, which was resolved via email communication. Fall Chinook survival is a big challenge that should be addressed soon. The M&E Plan is an FHMP requirement. Four Peaks Environmental has distributed a preliminary draft to the subgroup for review.

Questions / Requests:

- What is the timeline for the subgroup to begin meeting again and also for these issues to be distributed to the FTC?
- Can Tacoma provide a description of the full scope of monitoring that is occurring, so it is possible to evaluate how well current monitoring aligns with the Monitoring Plan?
- There is a need for a Subgroup Charter. It's time to update the most recent draft.

Travis noted Tacoma is in the process of recruiting for and interviewing candidates to work in this area. Consultants are also being considered as Tacoma is committed to keeping things moving forward per the requirements in the FHMP for this. He will follow up with Matt B and Bryce on this.

**Action Item:** Travis to coordinate with Bryce to respond to the above requests. Send the email chains for Chinook broodstock and coho jack transport out to the larger distribution list. Add Stephen Lewis (per his request) to the M&E Subgroup.

### Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group (TWG)

John noted the last two meetings have been canceled, delaying completion of a study plan for the 2024 season. Work to be done:

- Develop a study plan for the 2024 season.
- Update the Charter for this TWG.
- Locate and distribute the latest version of the draft Downstream Adaptive Management Plan.

**Action Item:** Travis to look for a more current version (John's draft is from 2018) of the charter. Add this to the December FTC agenda.

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## **LCPUD Dam Operations**

**Presenter: Joe First**

Removal of baffle panels: These were removed from spillways 2 and 3 in preparation for flood season. They will be reinstalled in March.

Unit 2 Maintenance: This is complete, and the unit is ready to operate.

Debris Barrier Rehabilitation Project: The PUD has extended the bid opening to November 28 to accommodate contractors' requests for more time.

Reservoir Drawdown: They are still planning to do a 3-4-week reservoir drawdown (16-20 ft) in February of 2024 to allow the contractor to clean out sediment around the debris barrier moorage site blocks. The drawdown could happen sooner in the event of a naturally occurring flood.

Trash Rack Repair: Unit 2 has a couple of bent bars on slot 4. Divers repaired those bars. A lot of debris (mostly wood with some sediment ) was removed. The damage to the bars occurred in 1996 when the clam shell from a large crane struck the trash rack several times. The PUD can now use the trash rake all the way down on slot 4. Slots 1-3 had 10 ft of debris build-up. Slot 4 had 20 ft of debris build-up.

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### **Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery Fund / Habitat and Production (HAP) Subgroup**

**Presenters: Denise Smee, Melora Shelton, and Brian Gale**

LCFRB/SFRB Update: Denise reported the 2023 contracts with the Cascade Forest Conservancy area almost done (no requests to extensions or budget changes). Lewis County PUD completed their Kiona Creek project this summer. Well done!

Decision Document 2023-06: Melora walked through the DD for the 2024 update to the CRR Implementation Strategy. The Strategy is out for a 30-day review (due November 20). Recognizing how busy everyone is, she offered that any edits to the Decision Document submitted before November 27 can be incorporated into the version that is presented at the December FTC meeting for review and final approval.

As presented at the October FTC meeting, the 2024 update includes items identified after the 2023 grant round (moving away from projects that require acquisition, etc.) Edits were made to the eligibility information to better align with the LCFRB Salmon Recovery Grant round.

HAP Subcommittee: Brian Gale reported this group has been meeting regularly and working on defining what makes a good HAP project and how that can be translated into good guidance for projects. The subcommittee is looking for ways to increase potential applicant engagement. They have been considering project categories that could perhaps be put forward as suggestions / bait for others to want to work on. E.g., artificial redds, recruiting of early outmigrants, using facilities other than TPU or WDFW, adult release sites, and kelt reconditioning. They solicited informal feedback on these potential projects from technical staff who participate on the M&E Subgroup in a discussion at the last HAP subcommittee meeting. Project feedback leaned toward net pen sites or incorporating 2 or 3 more adult release sites (more mobile, strategic). Eric reiterated his appreciation for the M&E folks who offered their perspectives. The HAP Subcommittee feels like they now have some categories from which to develop out some solid projects and provide guidance to applicants that can improve the likelihood that that project would succeed. He also clarified that nothing precludes doing other projects not on the list. Melora thanked WDFW and Tacoma folks who participated in these conversations.

**Action Item**: All to review DD 2023-06 and submit comments by November 27 and/or be ready to suggest them during the final review at the December FTC Meeting.

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

Michael Deckert:

- Cispus Adult Release Site: It's exciting to see the Copper Canyon Facility being used as multi-use facility and Tacoma taking advantage of the facility while the Tom Music Bridge Adult Release site is inoperable. How long do the trucks occupy the ramp? On what days are fish typically hauled, weekdays, weekends?

- Cowlitz Falls Operations: Encourage the planning for the extended Scanewa Reservoir drawdowns in 2024, consider and address not only the environmental concerns, but also the impacts to fishing and other recreation opportunities in the reservoir and Cispus River

Laura (LCPUD): In accordance with the license and the Biological Opinion, LCPUD has to do reservoir maintenance drawdowns at a time with least impact to fish. There are concerns about sediment movement.

Scott (TPU): They typically haul once or twice a week (mid-week vs. weekends). It only takes 10 minutes to release fish, so the recreational impacts are minimal. This is the first year of doing this. Scott anticipates similar timeframes in the future.

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### **Topics for December 5, 2023 FTC Meeting at Veterans Memorial Museum in Chehalis**

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities, Cispus Release Site
- LCPUD Cowlitz Falls Dam Operations
- Status of Transition Plans (?)
- Review of 2023 FTC Work Plan
  - Travis to send out final 2023 FTC Work Plan (last circulated on June 7) in anticipation of the 2024 Work Plan.
- Satellite Rearing (?)
- Downstream Adaptive Management TWG
- Monitoring and Evaluation Subgroup
- Presentation of 5-year Disease Management Report (?)
- Presentation by Ecology: Model Toxics Control Act and Riffe Lake (?)
- CRR Fund / HAP Subcommittee – Review / Approve DD 2023-06
- Preview January FTC Meeting

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### **Meeting Evaluation**

- Got out early
- Good participation
- Happy to have Michael of Our Family Kayaks join us today
- Excellent cat participation

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### **Josua's Inspirational Quote**

Josua had intended to share a different quote, but all the talk about grandma's home cooking at the start of the meeting caused him to select this quote instead: "Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home." – Edith Sitwell

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### **Closing Remarks**

Travis ended the meeting by thanking everyone for the great collaboration. He acknowledged Tacoma's staffing challenges are frustrating for all. Tacoma is doing its best to get the subgroups up and running again.

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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