

**Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project  
FERC No. 2016  
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee  
Meeting Summary**

July 7, 2026 from 9:30am-1:15pm

**FTC Representative Attendees**

**Ecology:** Andrew Luymes

**Tacoma:** Melora Shelton

**TU:** Jonathan Stumpf

**WDFW:** Bryce Glaser

**Yakama Nation:** Bill Sharp

**Additional Attendees**

**BPA:** Michael Boyles

**Ecology:** Anne Baxter

**LCPUD:** Joe First, Laura Wolfe

**LCFRB:** Steve Manlow

**Tacoma:** Chan Ankeny, Missy Baier, Jenise Bauman, Sam Gibbons, Scott Gibson, Sean Luis, Jamie Murphy, Eric Shoblom, Chris Vaughn, Wyatt Wood

**WDFW:** Todd Hillson, Josua Holowatz, Chris Kopack, Peggy Miller, Larona Newhouse, Matthew Siskey, Sean Toomey, Kris Warner, Phil Sandstrom, Kevin Young

**Facilitator:** Jennifer Arnold, Reciprocity Consulting, LLC

**Public Attendees:** Randy LeDuc (Coastal Conservation Association), Larry Pryor (Northwest Fisheries Enhancement)

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**2026 FTC Meeting Dates**

Aug 4, Sep 1 (in person), Oct 6, Nov 3, Dec 1 (in person)

**Review of Agenda and Action Items**

We reviewed the agenda and action items.

**Approval of Last Month's Meeting Summary**

FTC members reviewed and edited last month's FTC Meeting Summary for clarity. It will be posted on the public website.

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**Updates**

Announcements

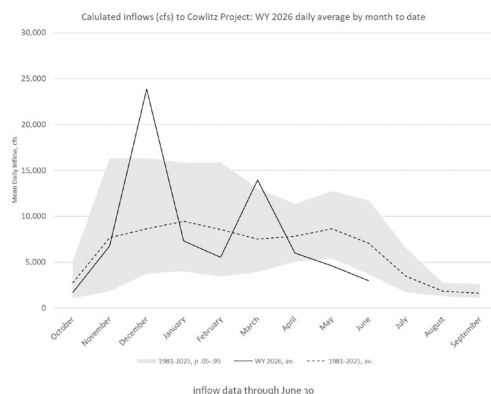
**Distribution of final DDs:** Currently, it is taking Tacoma longer to post final DDs to their website due to updates for accessibility. In the meantime, M. Shelton is emailing final DDs to the FTC email list to make sure that everyone has the final version.

**FTC Process Improvements:** J. Arnold offered a few simple process improvements, which FTC members supported:

- Standard file naming conventions – We will use YYYYMMDD-CowlitzFTC-two-to-three-descriptive-words-draft-or-final. We will have a slight variation for DDs where the DD number replaces the date: YYYY-##-CowlitzFTC-two-to-three-descriptive-words-draft-7dayhold-or-final.
- Presenters are encouraged to use the last one to several slides to capture take-home messages or conclusions that should be captured in the meeting summary. J. Arnold will not try to summarize other aspects of the presentation since we distribute the slides and it is useful to preserve the wording chosen by the presenters, who are technical experts, rather than having multiple versions.
- We are continuing to hone in on the right level of detail for the meeting summaries. J. Arnold will aim to:
  - capture less detail for informational agenda items,
  - capture the current level of detail when there is discussion related to decisions and action items, and
  - not capture changes to DDs when live edits are captured in the DD.

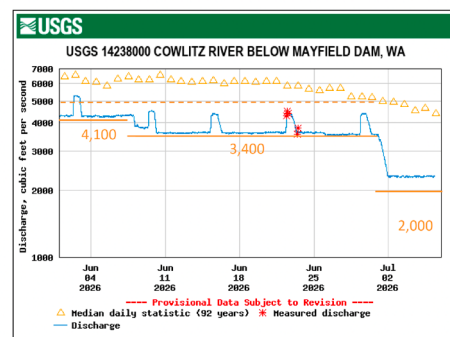
Hydro Operations Update by Melora Shelton (Tacoma) (emailed 7/6, revised slides 7/10 20260706-CowlitzFTC-Hydrostatus-revised.pdf)

- June inflows were historically low despite 114% of normal precipitation.
- Reservoir drafted slowly.
- Snowpack gone as of mid-June.
- Reduced operational flow through June, now typical summer low flow.
- 6/8 minor ramp deviation.
- 10-day forecast is variable temperatures and dry.
- Climate outlook tilts dry and likely warm through September



#### Outflow

USGS discharge is operational flow  
Minimum flow is "basement"



Current (7/6) 2,320 cfs.  
Spring minimum 5,000 cfs (reduced 5/15) + fish transport flow (12 hrs at 120% if <8,000 cfs);  
Summer minimum 2,000 cfs. No flow deviations.

### Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Subcommittee by Jenise Bauman (Tacoma)

The M&E subcommittee meets monthly and is working on the following topics:

- coho Mayfield Net Pens Assessment – enumeration methods for Phase III
- ultrasound for spring Chinook sex determination – preparing a review of methodology
- spring and fall Chinook GREB 1L – expecting molecular results soon
- Tilton fall Chinook – review of Limiting Factors Analysis framework
- fall Chinook otolith – drafting directed study plan for review soon, and
- Life Cycle Modeling – finalizing data format, soon to regroup with the specialized subcommittee.

More information is covered in the subcommittee meeting summaries distributed monthly to the FTC.

### TWG Subcommittee Update by Jenise Bauman (Tacoma)

The TWG subcommittee meets monthly and has been discussing the following topics:

- Operational Updates from Cowlitz Falls and Mayfield
- Coho Parr Assessment – determining how many samples are required to detect PIT tagged fish downstream
- Formalizing an approach to evaluate Fish Collection Efficiency (FCE) models
- AT Study – equipment has been deployed and treatment blocks using acoustic and PIT tags have started for the season
- Juvenile Coho Aging collection has started – scales will be read in August, and
- Downstream Adaptive Management Plan (DAMP) revisions will begin in July.

More information is covered in the subcommittee meeting summaries distributed monthly to the FTC.

### Hatchery Associated Production (HAP) Update by Melora Shelton (Tacoma)

The HAP subcommittee has not met and has nothing to report.

M. Shelton also provided an update from the CRR Strategy Working Group:

- They met to identify areas of the Implementation Strategy likely requiring updates and will meet again next week.
- They will share an update with FTC in August.

S. Manlow provided an update on project proposals for CRR funding in this grant round:

- All four grant proposals submitted applications after participating in virtual meetings and field tours. The proposals are all strong.
- The standard review process is underway including TAC scoring, LCFRB staff review and ranking, and TAC recommendations before the next FTC meeting. As usual, the LCFRB board won't make its final recommendation until after the

August FTC meeting. S. Manlow will share project details and the draft recommendations at the August FTC meeting.

Fish Facilities Update by Eric Shoblom (Tacoma) (emailed 7/10 - 20260707-CowlitzFTC-Fish-Facilities-Update.pdf)

- Fish currently returning to the separator are spring Chinook and summer steelhead.
- All release sites are useable, except Scanewa due to elevated temperatures, which is typical after July 1. Fish are being released at Copper Canyon Creek as an alternative.
- Rainbow trout plants are ongoing March-August.
- For the Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Remodel, Tacoma continues to work with the consultant on a series of draft technical memos. This month they worked on memos for the Pollution Abatement (PA) pond, fish transfer, and permitting matrix. Tacoma met with WDFW Hatchery staff to review the technical memos on water supply, bioprogram, incubation, office, and outdoor rearing.
- For the Mayfield Juvenile Bypass System, Tacoma has a new project manager Gus Garcia, who is also the project manager for the Trout Hatchery Remodel and some of the satellite rearing upgrades.
- For the Mayfield Net Pens, the M&E Subcommittee has been discussing inventory enumeration options and predation prevention. Implementation is moving forward with staff marking and tagging fish (BY2025).

Questions

- P. Sandstrom asked if E. Shoblom can provide numbers in the slides as it is a lot to absorb verbally.
- P. Sandstrom also asked if WDFW can have access to the technical memos. E. Shoblom responded he can share the technical memos once they are finalized and offered to send any final ones to P. Sandstrom.

**2026 Spring Flow Reduction End-of-Season Review by Melora Shelton and Scott Gibson (Tacoma) (emailed 7/10 - 20260707-CowlitzFTC-Spring-Flow-Reduction-Review.pdf)**

M. Shelton summarized what happened during this past season's spring flow reduction:

- Tacoma initiated consultation early (March),
- implemented flow reduction May 15 – June 30,
- reduced operational flow levels as planned ("basement" to 4,500, 4,100, and 3,400 cfs),
- adaptively managed reduction timing due to historically low May and June inflows, and
- conducted fish transport flows as required with some timing changes.

S. Gibson presented results from the stranding surveys:

- Tacoma conducted stranding surveys following flow decreases and transport flows and found:
  - four stranding locations became disconnected during the flow reduction
  - 1,251 juvenile fish recovered and released to the Cowlitz River
  - five observed mortalities (Chinook) and
  - no HOR fish observed.
- Tacoma coordinated with FTC throughout, including providing stranding survey preliminary results and advanced notification for flow schedule changes (transport and decreases).

M. Shelton presented data and an effectiveness evaluation. Tacoma concluded that:

- flow reduction was very effective
- estimated 12.7 ft of conservation as of June 30
- avoided forecasted record-low June 30 elevations
- supports summer and fall resource adequacy and operational flexibility, and
- adaptive management improved effectiveness overall.

M. Shelton went over next steps:

- FERC 5/29 Additional Information Request (AIR)
  - Consultation documentation with NOAA and USFWS, due by 6/15; response filed 6/12.
  - Report documenting flows provided, identifying any known adverse effects and/or incidental take, strandings, and consultation documentation; due 45 days after return to normal conditions. In preparation, due to FERC 8/14.
- Annual Article 402 for Report 2026, due 12/31/2026
  - Focus on flow modification, including FTC consultation and FERC coordination. No FTC review.
- Annual Article 409 Report for 2026, due 10/1/2027
  - Focus on stranding surveys, including expanded methods documentation. FTC review.

Discussion:

- A. Luymes asked Tacoma a reflective question: What would you do differently or better next time reduced spring flow is needed?
- M. Shelton responded that it felt like a hard pivot after finalizing the DD and then needing to reduce flow even sooner than expected. It might have felt less abrupt if she would have been more direct about needing to be nimble. She emphasized the importance of communication between Tacoma's Power Operations and Natural Resources. She was working hard to understand how much flexibility the Power Operations team needed and how to communicate that to FTC. Looking back, she would have communicated the need for flexibility earlier.
- There was discussion about reporting to FERC and when FTC would have a chance to review the stranding report.
- Tacoma will send the AIR report to FTC for review before the August 14 due date, but they emphasized it will not contain the level of detail on the stranding

report that WDFW is requesting. The expanded narrative on stranding survey methods will be in the 409 report that is not due until October 1, 2027.

- B. Glaser expressed concern that a fall 2027 timeline does not allow any comments or improvements to be addressed prior to next spring when we could be in the same situation with the possibility of reduced spring flow. B. Glaser expressed concern that WDFW's previous comments were not addressed in the presentation today, including: 1) reporting the time that stranding surveys were started in relation to when ramp down occurred and 2) the snapshot of stranding does not allow quantification of the total incidental take.
- M. Shelton responded that Tacoma hears WDFW's concerns and the 409 report is where they were planning to provide additional detail. She will research whether there is a formal review of the AIR response. If not, FTC can provide input anyway.
- B. Glaser emphasized that Tacoma could be proactive and assign the stranding survey methodology to the M&E Subcommittee to review.

**Action items:**

- Tacoma will provide FTC the opportunity to review AIR report on spring flow reduction due to FERC by August 14.
- M. Shelton will research whether there is a formal review for the AIR response.

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**M&E Charter Update by Jenise Bauman (Tacoma)** *(emailed 6/5 - 2026-06-02 Draft 1 ME Charter 2026 For Review.docx and revision emailed 6/30 - 2026-06-DD-CowlitzFTC-ME-Charter-Final.docx)*

The M&E charter was created last year, and following FTC protocols, this is the opportunity to review it annually to see if any updates are needed.

No changes had been made since the edits at the June FTC meeting. The group reviewed the proposed final DD together and made a series of minor edits. Some edits clarified differences between the M&E Implementation Plan and the Annual Operating Plan: The M&E Plan requires a M&E Annual Implementation Plan, which is one component of the larger Annual Operating Plan.

All FTC members present supported this DD.

**Action item:** M. Shelton will send out DD 2026-06 (M&E Charter Update) to FTC members not present for a 7-day hold.

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**LCPUD Updates by Joe First (LCPUD)**

- Cowlitz Falls Unit 1 is running at low flows (1500 cfs) today.
- Unit 2 will begin its outage on July 13 for maintenance scheduled to be complete by the end of August.

- Both units are expected to be available in September.

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### **Fish Hatchery Management Plan (FHMP) Update by Jenise Bauman (Tacoma)**

*(emailed 6/30 - 2026-07-DD-CowlitzFTC-FHMP-Update-Draft.docx and 7/10 - 2026-07-DD-CowlitzFTC-FHMP-Update-Draft2.docx)*

Tacoma provided an update that they have not heard back from FERC on the request to extend the current FHMP to 10 years. They have also not heard back from their consultant on the minimum level of changes needed to stay in compliance. The group discussed draft DD 2026-07 and made live edits.

M. Shelton confirmed that FTC will have the opportunity to review all proposed updates before finalizing the FHMP update and approving the DD. The assumption is that the update can be done with minimal changes. Tacoma does not yet know how long the consultant will need to do their review and provide recommendations. The FHMP is due to FERC in October, which means FTC has two more meetings and the DD will have to be approved by September. M. Shelton gave everyone the heads up that there may not be time for a 30-day review.

#### **Discussion:**

- The group clarified the time when “the clock started” for the 6-year review cycle. They agreed it was October 2, 2020, the date of the [last FHMP submittal](#).
- Following up on the action item from the June FTC meeting, J. Arnold asked if anyone reviewed the FHMP and considered if there were any issues that should be updated or addressed in the near-term. B. Glaser responded that the WDFW team discussed this question. They did a cursory review and did not flag any major issues. There is a lot that could be updated – figures and what’s been accomplished – but doing that would open a can of worms and could identify other things that need attention. Doing a full update and review would take time away from the priority work that FTC has already identified and is actively working on.

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

L. Pryor referenced complaints submitted to FERC. M. Shelton responded that there is an official FERC process underway and any response must go through official FERC channels.

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### **Topics for August 1, 2026 FTC Meeting on Teams**

We reviewed the proposed agenda topics:

- FHMP Update (DD 2026-07)
- Gravel and wood placement

- CRR Implementation Strategy Update
  - CRR Funding Decision (step 1 for a DD)
  - Usual Updates
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## **Public Comment Period #2 – Any topic**

R. LeDuc and L. Pryor referenced complaints submitted to FERC, specifically related to creel reports. M. Shelton repeated that any responses must go through official FERC channels. Tacoma cannot respond at FTC meetings.

B. Glaser echoed that he is not responding to the comment but wanted to emphasize a disclaimer with the creel reports referenced:

The Columbia River and Tributary Fishery Report is a weekly creel summary of angler effort and catch rates for the Columbia River and southwest Washington tributaries. Information is based on interviews conducted at select fishing access sites on a randomized schedule and does not represent all angler effort or catch at a given location. Reports also include information about Columbia River tributary weirs and other fishing-related resources. Content varies by season, run timing, and recreational fishery status.

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## **Meeting Evaluation**

What went well? What can we change or improve in the future?

- Great attendance, especially considering the first July FTC meeting in years.
  - Great clarification questions and quick access to references related to the FHMP update.
  - Appreciation for institutional knowledge.
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## **Josua's Inspirational Quote**

"I love summertime more than anything else in the world. That is the only thing that gets me through the winter, knowing that summer is going to be there." - Jack McBrayer