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

October 6, 2026 from 9:30am-12:50pm

FTC Representative Attendees
Ecology: Andrew Luymes
Tacoma: Melora Shelton
WDFW: Bryce Glaser
Trout Unlimited: Jonathan Stumpf
Yakama Nation: Bill Sharp

Additional Attendees
BPA: Michael Boyles
LC: Ann Weckback
LCPUD: Joe First
LCFRB: Steve Manlow
Tacoma: Shana Barehand, Jenise Bauman, Matt Bleich, Ben Caviness, Sam Gibbons, Scott Gibson, Teresa Loo, Sean Luis, Eric Shoblom, Wyatt Wood
WDFW: Todd Hillson, Josua Holowatz, Peggy Miller, Phil Sandstrom, Kris Warner, Kevin Young
Yakama Nation: Joe Zendt

Facilitator: Jennifer Arnold, Reciprocity Consulting, LLC

Public Attendees: Randy LeDuc (Coastal Conservation Association), Larry Pryor (NWFE)

2026 FTC Meeting Dates

Nov 3, Dec 1 (in person)

Review of Agenda and Action Items

We reviewed the agenda and action items. The action item below will be carried over to next month.

Action item: M. Bleich will track down where the traditional method for calculating FCE is formalized with FERC and what might need to be addressed or resolved with the DAMP update or adjacent to it as FTC considers other calculation methods from an adaptive management standpoint.

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.

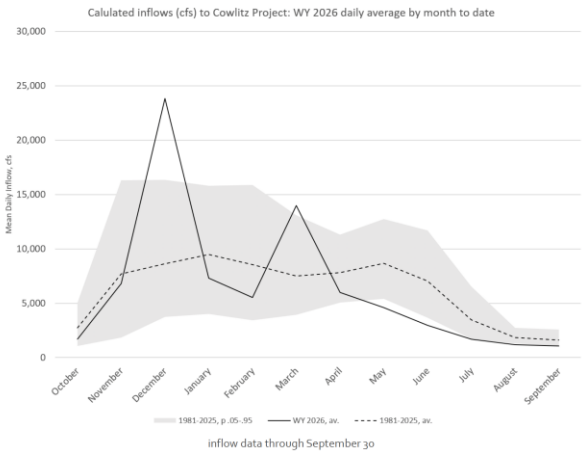
Updates

Announcements

Tacoma's website: M. Shelton thanked everyone for their patience as there is still a bit of a backlog in uploading meeting summaries to the FTC website due to the extra steps needed for the new accessibility standards. The password-protected site might still be accessible now, but it is going away soon. Tacoma is working on providing access to FTC for a SharePoint site, where we can store documents that we can all access.

Hydro Operations Update by Melora Shelton (Tacoma) *(emailed 10/5, 20261005-CowlitzFTC-Hydrostatus.pdf)*

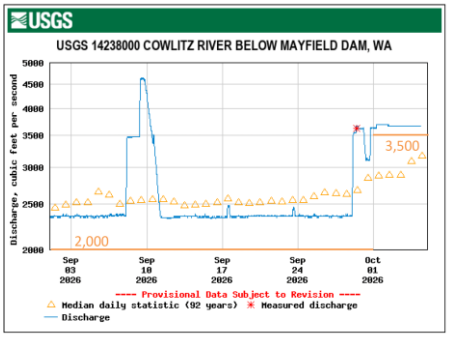
- The streak of extremely low inflows continues (May – September).
- The reservoir drafted about 12 ft.
- There was some increased flow at Mayfield in response to load.
- October 1 minimum flow change to 3,500 cfs.
- There were no flow or ramp deviations.
- The 10-day forecast is warm and dry throughout.
- El Niño is present and strengthening.
- The climate outlook is precipitation neutral and likely warm through December.



Outflow

USGS discharge is operational flow

Minimum flow



Current (10/5) 3,660 cfs.

Minimum: 10/1 change from 2,000 to 3,500 cfs. No flow or ramp 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 – including a PIT tag mark/recapture study and improving confidence in truck weights

- Fall Chinook directed studies
    - GREB1L – laboratory analysis is completed, data is in the final QA/QC, then the next step will be to compare separator identification with molecular data and photographs to determine spring versus fall Chinook
    - Limiting Factor Analysis Framework – evaluating data needs and drafting a qualitative narrative
    - Otolith Proposal – working with WDFW's otolith lab to analyze fall Chinook otoliths to determine origin of unmarked fall chinook, whether they are coming from the Tilton or Lower Cowlitz
- Systematically prioritizing baseline studies exploring two work flows:
    - WDFW is color coding M&E plans based on data needs, and
    - Tacoma is designing an AOP based around existing data to identify data gaps.

The M&E subcommittee is also working on these other priorities:

- Developing an annual M&E implementation plan, as described in the recent charter update, to bring to FTC for approval similar to the TWG proposed list of evaluations approved each year
- Trout hatchery enumeration – discussing methods
- Life Cycle Model – waiting on review of data sources and reformatting to fit with IPM framework
- Transition Talk Planning for December – If there is progress with the Life Cycle Model, the focus will first be winter steelhead. If not, the focus will be fall Chinook and findings from the GREB1L study.

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

<u>TWG Subcommittee Update by Jenise Bauman (Tacoma)</u>

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

- Standing facility operations and evaluation updates
- AT study demobilization and data processing of 2025 and 2026 data
- Coho Parr Assessment Alternative – WDFW is in the process of developing an alternative to Tacoma's original approach. When it is ready, TWG will bring it to the FTC as a decision document in November or December.
- TWG evaluation recommendations to FTC for 2027, including the continuation of current work:
    - Third and final year of AT study
    - DAMP revisions
    - Alternate tagging and model comparisons
    - Coho parr assessments
- Fallback data summary
- CFNSC summer summary, and
- Extended collection at CFFF and understanding new data.

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.

Fish Facilities Update by Eric Shoblom (Tacoma) *(emailed 10/8 20261006-CowlitzFTC-Fish-Facilities-Update.pdf)*

- Currently, all of the target species are returning except for winter steelhead. The first winter steelhead should return around the end of October to the middle of November.
- Spring Chinook returns will likely be done in another week or two. Returns this year were considerably higher than the 5-year and 10-year averages. Spawning was completed a couple of weeks ago, and the broodstock goals were met.
- Fall Chinook returns appeared on July 29th, and to date, more than a thousand have showed up. The peak should be in the next week or two. Returns are below both the 5-year and 10-year averages. Similar to the challenges of the last few years, Tacoma to date only has about 25% of the broodstock needs at almost halfway through the season.
- Coho started arriving to the separator at the end of August, a little later in 2026 than the past few years. Brood collection is on schedule. Current NOR coho returns are somewhat higher than recent years.
- Summer Steelhead started returning at the beginning of April and are expected to continue through the beginning of January 2027. Returns to date this year are lower than the 5-year average but higher than the 10-year average. Brood collection goals were met this year, and spawning will start in early December.
- Cutthroat started returning in the middle of August. Returns are currently slightly lower than the 5-year average and quite a bit lower than the10-year average. All HOR cutthroat are currently being collected for broodstock. If the target numbers are not met at the separator, hatchery staff will seine the Cowlitz Trout Hatchery (CTH) outfall to collect the remaining numbers for the broodstock goal.
- All release sites are open.
- Staff are preparing the Mayfield net pens and satellite rearing sites as planned.
- The consultant has prepared the Analysis of Alternatives Technical Memo for the Trout Hatchery remodel for Tacoma to review.
- Work is ongoing at the Mayfield Juvenile Bypass System(JBS).
- At the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery, the consultant continues to work on designs for hatchery drains.

Discussion

- B. Glaser asked when FTC will be able to review the alternatives analysis from the consultant for the Trout Hatchery remodel. Tacoma is just about to begin their internal review of the alternatives and their analysis. Once they are comfortable with it, it will be shared with FTC for review, probably in the first quarter of 2027.

M. Bleich clarified that Tacoma will not make any pre-determination on the alternatives. They just want to make sure that they are comfortable with the alternatives analyzed before sharing it with FTC.

Update on Mayfield JBS by M. Bleich, Tacoma

- For context, FTC's last DD related to Mayfield was a 25% design. Tacoma's action items were to get financial approval to move forward and get a Project Manager on board. Tacoma has now done both of those. Tacoma managers also wanted to take a closer look at the 25% design to see if they foresaw any challenges. They identified significant concerns around FERC dam safety related to crossing the left bank spanning Mayfield dam.
- Tacoma is now considering if there are alternate alignments that would still meet the design objectives approved by FTC, including fish health. Tacoma is working with the same consultants who did the 25% design. If they are able to come up with an alternate alignment, then Tacoma wants to understand what that means. If they are not, then Tacoma needs to consider what's next. The only way they can address the dam safety concerns is to shift the alignment to the other side of the river. M. Bleich emphasized that they are exploring options, but they might not be able to shift the alignment. Tacoma is targeting the November or December FTC meetings to provide an update on this. Then, the same benchmarks for FTC review will apply as described in the DD – 60%, 90%, and final design.

Gravel and Large Wood Augmentation by Ben Caviness (Tacoma) *(emailed 10/8 2026-10-06-Cowlitz-FTC-Gravel-LW-Augmentation-Presentation.pdf)*

B. Caviness provided photos and data to show that Tacoma has placed the gravel and wood on schedule for this year.

- The wood was sourced from Riffe and Mayfield reservoirs.
- As described in the Settlement Agreement, the large wood was placed along the shore and is free to move, not anchored down. It was not marked or stamped.
- B. Caviness showed photos from summer 2025 and summer 2026 noting the gravel that had been moved from the island and the historic pile by the December 2025 storms. He also showed photos after the most recent gravel placement.
- The gravel placement occurred all on one day without any logistical challenges. In the past, there were problems with the Conveyor Aggregate Delivery (CAD) truck, which meant it took up to a week to place the same amount of gravel.
- Since last year, Tacoma has been ahead of their goal for gravel, which everyone celebrated recognizing challenges they had with placement prior to 2021 and the years it has taken to catch up.

Discussion

- As a new FTC representative for Yakama Nation, J. Zendt asked where the target of 500 cu. yd. of gravel augmentation per year came from. Is that calculated as a number that would replace a natural process, or was it just determined to be a feasible number? M. Shelton responded that it was negotiated as part of the Settlement Agreement. She will send him the original gravel plan and supplement for context.
- B. Glaser echoed appreciation for Tacoma catching up with their goal for gravel augmentation and that the new site is working well.
- B. Glaser also asked about the very large pile of gravel on the other side. At high flows, gravel has moved out at the toe. He wondered if it was a sluffing hazard for anglers. He also wondered if it might be easy enough while heavy equipment was out there to push some of the gravel from the top to fill in the toe, which would accelerate recruitment. He acknowledged that he didn't know if there would be any permitting issues. He clarified that he is not saying this should be an obligation for Tacoma, but he was just wondering if it might be possible while the equipment is already mobilized. E. Shoblom responded that it is not a hazard for anglers. M. Shelton responded that Tacoma has talked about this before. They don't have a formalized plan, and they are not sure what it would take. However, they are willing to continue the conversation.
- J. Holowatz referenced the hydrograph in B. Caviness's last slide showing that Cowlitz River flows were above 20,000 cfs during the December 2025 storms. He emphasized that in the last seven years there have only been two other storm events resulting in flows over 20,000 cfs. The gravel is like a big pile of marbles moving very slowly. The sooner the gravel is mobilized, the less dredging that will be needed at the boat ramp.

Action item: M. Shelton will send J. Zendt the original gravel plan and supplement.

Mayfield Net Pens by Wyatt Wood (Tacoma)

W. Wood provided on update on Tacoma's preparations to move fish to the Mayfield net pens on November 16.

- It will be similar to last year but with less fish. They will have three taggers tagging 400 fish each. They will randomize which pen they start with to remove bias.
- The model is being updated with truck weights. C. Kopak brought the model to the last M&E subcommittee meeting. Tacoma will provide comments and then will implement the changes. They will use truck scales to replicate it in the future.

Discussion

- B. Glaser repeated what he said at the M&E meeting that WDFW is excited to see progress. He also emphasized that it is important to finalize the study design as soon as possible. WDFW was hoping the study design would be finalized before the season started. It still needs a round of final comments and then

review by the M&E subcommittee before it goes to the FTC for approval. He also emphasized that last year's draft study design was a solid starting point. J. Bauman replied that Tacoma is getting the final details ready and will send it to the M&E subcommittee by next Wednesday.

Action item: Tacoma will send the Mayfield net pen study design to the M&E subcommittee by Wednesday, October 14.

Thank you and Congratulations to Bill Sharp (Yakama Nation)

This was B. Sharp's last FTC meeting before retirement. Everyone thanked him for his years of service and wished him well for his retirement. They also welcomed J. Zendt as the new Yakama Nation representative.

- B. Sharp expressed gratitude on behalf of the Yakama Nation. He emphasized how well organized the FTC is and the great progress he has seen. He specifically recognized how John Serl had been such a resource for him as he started in his role with FTC. He also recognized Mike Kahn (LCPUD) for teaching him so much and going out on fishing trips together.
- M. Shelton thanked B. Sharp for his engagement over the years. She emphasized that the FTC can only make progress with this type of participation from interested parties.
- M. Bleich echoed his appreciation for working with B. Sharp and the partnership with the Yakama Nation.

CRR Implementation Strategy by Steve Manlow (LCFRB) *(emailed 10/5 2026-09-DD-CowlitzFTC-CRR-Strategy-Draft.docx)*

S. Manlow reviewed the draft DD 2026-09 for the CRR Implementation Strategy. This is step 2 of the 3-step DD process, where the DD will be finalized at next month's FTC meeting.

In August, M. Shelton also sent the draft CRR Implementation Strategy to FTC for a 30-day review along with a crosswalk summarizing proposed changes by section relative to the previous update from 2024. They received some comments, which were incorporated.

Discussion

- B. Glaser remembered that there was a DD to lift the cap for the current round but not remove the cap entirely until there was discussion with FTC. Are you now proposing that the cap be lifted permanently?
- S. Manlow responded yes, that the proposal is to remove the cap permanently but that FTC could impose a cap at the start of any funding cycle if they want to. For example, they might want to set a cap if they wanted to make sure there were enough funds to do a large-scale priority project. M. Shelton added the

example that if FTC wants to ensure there is enough funding for the Tilton assessment and we were getting close to the end of the program, FTC could add a cap for that year.
- P. Miller asked if FTC could choose to fund some but not all of the projects recommended by LCFRB.
- S. Manlow responded that yes, FTC retains full authority to fund all, none, or some of the LCFRB recommended projects each funding cycle.

Action item: Everyone send comments on draft DD 2026-09 (CRR Strategy) by October 20.

CRR Funding Determination by Steve Manlow (LCFRB) *(emailed 9/29 2026-08 DD-CowlitzFTC-CRR-Funding-Determination-proposed-final.docx)*

S. Manlow reviewed the proposed final DD 2026-08 for the CRR Funding Determination to fund four project applications totaling $4.1M with $2.6M leveraged funding. This is step 3 of the 3-step DD process.

All FTC members present supported this DD.

Action item: M. Shelton will send out DD 2026-08 (CRR Funding Determination) to FTC members not present for a 7-day hold.

LCPUD Updates by Joe First (LCPUD)

- Both units are available.
- There was a scheduled outage for maintenance on the Glenoma transmission line September 21-25, which was successfully completed.
- The design of the second adult release site on the Cispus River (left bank) is in review. The initial design for the pipe was too steep, which means the velocity is too great for fish. They are looking into reducing the angle of the pipe.

Public Comment Period #1 - Agenda related

L. Pryor commented that fall Chinook numbers on the Cowlitz are disappointingly low with a high jack rate. He compared fall Chinook returns on the Cowlitz with more than 12,500 returning to the Kalama hatchery, which he stated still isn't good but at least better. He stated, last year, out of 3 million fall Chinook only 1,100 returned. He expressed disappointment that there hasn't been a fall Chinook fishery for years.

Topics for October 6, 2026 FTC virtually on Teams

We reviewed proposed agenda topics:

- Juvenile Bypass System
- CRR Implementation Strategy (step 3 for DD 2026-09)
- FTC meeting dates for 2027

Public Comment Period #2 – Any topic

L. Pryor asked, What is success for the FTC? In his view, meeting the Settlement Agreement requirements is not success. He emphasized there is still no fall Chinook fishery. He believes goals should be set in terms of adult returns. He added that coho returns have been good; however, there has only been a 6-12% harvest rate. His second comment was that Tacoma Public Utilities has an exceptional national reputation in the power sector; however, the Cowlitz fisheries does not have the same reputation.

Meeting Evaluation

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

- The speakers did a great job of staying on time.
- Good discussion on the draft DD. When there isn't much discussion, it's because people did their prep before the meeting.
- The 3-step DD process is cumbersome, but it helps us get comfortable with a decision and document decisions well.
- We funded 4 strong projects totaling $4.1M!
- The relationship between the FTC and LCFRB has been so valuable. We appreciate LCFRB staff and all the backend work they do so that we can invest CRR funds effectively. Five years ago, the CRR program was a struggle, and we just kept hoping that we would get to this point. It feels good.

Josua's Inspirational Message

Go outside and be observant.

As a child, J. Holowatz recounted that he used to go walking with his dad to look at the brown and black wooly bear caterpillars to predict what kind of a winter it would be. As the old tradition goes, a caterpillar with more black means a harsher winter, and more brown means a milder winter. By slowing down to observe the world around us, we can create fond memories that last a lifetime.