

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final MS Teams Meeting Summary
March 2, 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
Matt Bleich	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Phil Sandstrom	TPU
Tim Hoffnagle	TPU
Chris Foster	TPU
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Steve West	LCFRB
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Kate Day	USFS
Rudy Salakory	Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

2021 FTC Meeting Dates: 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 February FTC meeting summary was approved with edits and will be posted to the FTC public website.

Announcements

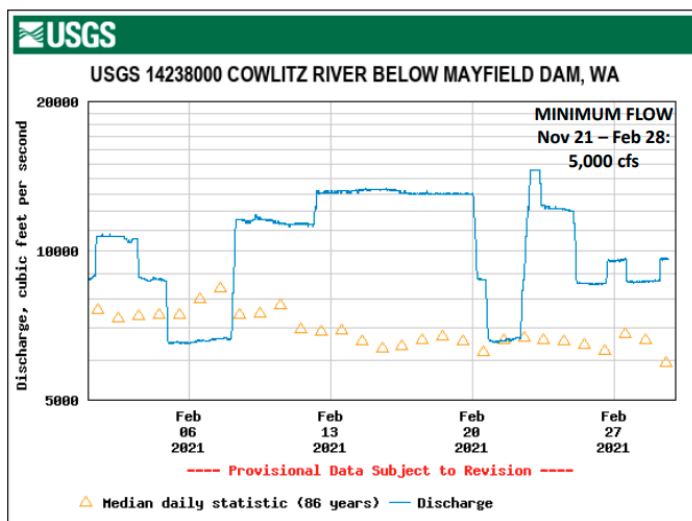
- Travis announced that as of March 1, Keith Underwood is no longer with Tacoma Power. Tacoma is moving forward with recruiting for a replacement. In the interim Matt Bleich is acting Natural Resources Manager. Nothing in Tacoma, mission, strategies, etc. has changed.
 - Travis noted these meetings will be conducted on the Teams platform going forward. He will add a phone number.
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Updates

Hydro Operations:

- Inflows: December flows were a bit low. After a very wet January, February inflows, at 8.7K cfs, were just a bit higher than the historical average of 8.4K cfs. The daily average for February started off quite low but a big event (18.6K cfs) on February 23 brought the average flows up to average. Tacoma had to do some side flow management to deal with those high inflows. The historical average for March is just above 7K cfs.
- Storage: At 722', the elevation of Riffe Lake is 6' above the historical average and well within the operational max of 749'. Tacoma drew down Riffe Lake to 722.5 on March 1. Mayfield is operating within its typical operating band.
- Snowpack has increased considerably in the last 30 days and Paradise and White Pass are currently at 147% of average. Great news!
- Mayfield Outflows: There were no excursions or exceedances over the last month. Outflows are at 9.6K cfs and are expected to be between 8.9K and 9.6K cfs in the next few days and may decrease later in the week. Tacoma will initiate fish transport flows as needed.
- Forecast: Fairly typical and relatively dry. Freezing levels are mostly below 5K' but expected to rise over the weekend.
 - Action Item: Matt to follow up with Carol about Ecology's concern about weather extremes as occurred like last year, especially with the amount of exposed contaminated material at the Kosmos contaminated site (CSID9890) project.

Outflow



No minimum flow or ramp exceedances; 3/1/2021: 9,600 cfs.
Minimum flow 3/1-6/30: 5,000 cfs plus fish transport flow (<8,000 cfs).

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 showed a map of the Barrier Dam Repair project which contains the area for future gravel augmentation (2021-2023). She noted this is not yet covered under an approved Construction Stormwater General Permit (CSWGP) or Water Quality Protection Plan (WQPP), Ecology and Tacoma Power are working diligently to get approvals in order. She pointed out the scour area (current, urgent work) and the position of

the crane. She noted the turbidity compliance point (300' downstream of in-water work) and showed a video of clean (uncontaminated) soil, but turbid water passing over the dam. It is critical that the turbidity is not visible at 300' downstream. When she arrived on site March 1, there was someone on top of the dam monitoring for turbidity. The CSWGP will be issued before the contractor for Phase 1 is selected. Carol also mentioned the Kosmos oil seep location and the 45-day period during which Tacoma will put together a remedial investigation plan, which will likely expand the cleanup action area to include the stockpile area of contamination. They will then meet with Ecology about a path forward. Josua announced that fishing boundary signs near Barrier Dam will be moved down to the typical 400' downstream of the dam this week; Carol was thankful, since she had seen someone within a few feet of the 300' compliance point stake when she was out there. Eric showed some photos of the barrier dam construction including the crane from other side of the river with the rock/boat sled they use to dump rock into the river. Kevin Smith is the PM for that activity. Rock placement is going well and with the crane the work is also going quickly and should conclude by March 12.

Fish Facilities: At the Salmon Hatchery separator, they are currently receiving ~30 winter steelhead/day, indicating the run is starting to normalize. Eric is hearing reports of folks catching decent numbers in the lower river, with some fish weighing in at 21-23 lbs! They are starting spring Chinook juvenile releases now and will continue through mid-March. The CF collector will start back up on March 15 and Mayfield juvenile collection will begin on April 1 (and that's no joke).

Trout Hatchery: Eric reported there has been a pause in interviews for the Trout Hatchery biologist. The intent had been for this person to develop the criteria for the Design Team. With Keith leaving Tacoma and a restructuring in Tacoma's Engineering Department due to a recent retirement, Eric's current priority relative to the Trout Hatchery is confirming with current leadership that Tacoma is still onboard with the original strategy, including what to contract out, what they have the capacity to do internally, and whether there should be a revised job description for the new biologist.

Blue Creek Dredging: This will proceed after WQPPs are approved. Tacoma plans to handle this work in house and is anticipating doing the work in August.

Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group: Matt reported they are currently between seasons and preparing for the start-up of the collector. This means finishing up reports, study designs, and other prep for the upcoming season. TWG members received a draft 2020 Season Cowlitz Falls collection report last week. Comments are due in two weeks. Tacoma will then have the contractor make revisions accordingly. The FTC can expect to see the report in around six weeks.

M&E Subgroup Report: Phil reported their February meeting was supplanted by the FHMP Steelhead Transition Planning Workshop. They did discuss the M&E work plan document which has been sent out to the group. They will cover the February agenda topics at their March meeting and will continue to share information and recommendations with the FTC. Their current focus is planning the data meeting for the Annual Program Review (APR) process. Stay tuned.

2021 FTC Work Plan: Travis reminded all this plan will be treated as a living document and can be combined with the FTC protocols. He will integrate also the feedback and proposing an updated version for approval in the coming weeks.

Action Items

- Travis: Integrate comments into a new draft plan that includes FTC protocols and send out for review by March 12 for possible approval at the April meeting.
- All: Send comments on the Work Plan to Travis by March 19.

Gravel Augmentation: Travis reminded all that the plan is still to add 500 cubic yards of gravel into the river below Barrier Dam this year and any additional material released beyond the required amount associated with the Barrier Dam Repair would also be calculated in. Tacoma will request an agency rep to be onsite when the Barrier Dam Repair gravel is released and that material amounts are calculated accurately. After the placement at Barrier Island, Tacoma will continue to work toward the Plan that outlines the long-term strategy.

Bryce reminded Travis once again that forming a subgroup would help alleviate the workload associated with the Gravel Augmentation Plan. Travis plans to send the initial draft of the plan out for FTC review in the April/May timeframe.

Last week Travis walked the ground on the Jorgensen property downstream. He is continuing discussions with Jorgensen that Florian had initiated in 2018. The outlook is very promising. They are working through some preliminary options currently. Peggy thanked Travis for reengaging with the Jorgensen property folks.

FERC Letter: Peggy and Bryce described a letter sent by FERC on February 8. (Travis forwarded the letter to all.) The letter had to do with Article 402 and the elements of the 2019 Instream Flow Annual Monitoring Report for the Cowlitz (daily flow record, deviation from instream flow, actual vs. required flow, etc.) This report doesn't have to go to the FTC for 30-day review. It mentioned requirements for ramping rates and stranding. Bryce noted WDFW is very interested in how best to minimize stranding. Bryce thinks the potential for stranding is increasing. Can we incorporate this into the Monitoring Plan through the FHMP? How do we determine the site of the problem and how best to mitigate it? If there is ramping, Tacoma needs to check to see if there is stranding and needs to coordinate with WDFW on those efforts – perhaps thru M&E group or the M&E Plan. Melora confirmed 6K cfs is the critical flow below which ramping rates apply. WDFW looks forward to working with Tacoma on this.

Cowlitz Fishery: Bryce reported briefly on spring Chinook outlook for the Lower Columbia River. There are still concerns with the Cowlitz return. WDFW has established a closure bubble around the mouth of the Cowlitz River to provide extra protection for Cowlitz fish hanging out there. All fishing opportunities will be reduced this year due to lower forecasts. Rule packages will be out in the next few days.

FHMP: Next Steps

Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt reported that the workshops are proceeding according to schedule. Participants are highly engaged and making good progress. He is keeping everyone informed with the meeting notes and materials developed along with way. The Fall Chinook Transition plan is substantially complete and has been sent out for FTC review. The team will revisit it again at the end in the context of all the transition plans. The focus of the last two workshops and the March 3 workshop is winter steelhead. Tacoma has also begun preparing background material for the transition plans to spring Chinook and coho.

The Winter Steelhead Workshops have focused on the current status and future of the early winter steelhead program. They are evaluating various options available and how to strategically fit these into the transition plans. The March 3 workshop should result in one or possibly two recommendations. They will then flesh out adult collection tables and draft harvest strategies including the M&E work plan. At the March 10 workshop they will discuss assignments and turnaround time.

Satellite Rearing / Response to Herrera Beutler Letter to FERC
Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt began by noting Tacoma has not received any direct communication from FERC on the congresswoman’s letter. He expects they will ask for how TP will address the key concerns listed in her letter:

- Satellite rearing facilities timeline and plan
- Hatchery production requirements (clarification around 650K lbs to 771.5 lbs.)
- Improving survival rates for hatchery fish (asking that we do what we said we’d do)

Matt reviewed the key points of the letter and discussed potential responses to each. He asked for feedback as Tacoma wants to be sure the FTC supports their response which will include how they encourage further engagement from the public in transition planning and the APR process. Matt thanked everyone for their help in reviewing the response points. The more we can show that we are all in this together the better, Travis has been discussing this with Erich Gaedeke from FERC. Tacoma would like to get FTC buy-off on certain initiatives and the associated timelines. They will draft their response and then send it out to the entire FTC for further review / comments. They will also consider whether a decision document might be appropriate.

Satellite Rearing: Matt will review all the comments received on the draft report and bring specific recommendations back to this group regarding next steps and how to incorporate comments and identify next steps.

Annual Program Review (APR)
Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt announced that it was time once again to plan for the APR.

2020 APR Draft Plan

Step	Task(s)	Purpose	Date	Who
Status and Trends Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Population Metrics - Run size, <u>Spawner</u>, Abundance, pHOS, recruits per <u>spawner</u>, pre-terminal catch, terminal catch • Hatchery Population Metrics - Annual hatchery run size, Broodstock collected, pNOB, PNI, Hatchery surplus, number released and locations, pre-terminal catch, terminal catch 	Update M&E data to represent 5 year trends to reflect progress toward program goals	End of March	Phil and X Lead Subgroup assigned by M&E
Public Meeting #1 - Science/APR Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of APR/FHMP Status • Summarize 5 year trends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Habitat o Natural Production o Pre-terminal/terminal harvest o Hatchery operations • Public Feedback, interim actions 	Science and information update. Public engagement with programs and interim program adjustments.	May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matt • Travis/Melora • Phil • WDFW • Eric • Matt • Public
Decision Rules Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and Discussion with FTC • Review Program Adjustment Options for 2021/2022 	Review Existing Decision Rules and suggested interim program adjustments	6/6/21	Matt (or delegate)/FTC
Public Meeting #2 - Decision Rule/Annual Adjustment Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present options to public and receive feedback • FHMP Public Review/Q&A • Satellite Rearing Ponds Report Presentation/Request for Public Comment 	Communicate annual plan and make final adjustments if necessary	End of June	Matt/FTC/Public
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Action plan based on 2021 APR process 	Documentation	August 1, 2021	Phil/Eric

Discussion:

- Should we plan additional discussion topics as outlined in the FHMP?
 - Steelhead recycling is always a popular topic.
 - Need to check the May date for Science/APR Conference and the June Public Meeting – Annual Program Review
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CRR Fund

Presenter: Travis Nelson

Travis reported Tacoma is having discussions internally and with the LCFRB re next steps. Travis is optimistic about the progress in these talks and intends to come up with a good plan forward in May. It appears the last DD finalized by the FTC on this was from the Nov. 2019 FTC meeting.

Action Item: Travis to send out the most recent version of CRR DD for all to review and identify what portions may need to be edited.

Potential Topics for April 6 FTC Meeting

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities, Satellite Rearing Update, Downstream Adaptive Mgt. TGW
 - Response to Letter to FERC
 - TPU Flow Planning Presentation (?)
 - 2021 FTC Work Plan
 - FHMP Transition Plans
 - M&E Subgroup (Spring Chinook Handling Protocol?)
 - Gravel Augmentation
 - Preview May FTC Meeting topics
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Meeting Evaluation

- Great attendance
- Impressive that folks could pivot from GoToMeeting to MS Teams.
- There was some levity and it felt good to be part of this meeting.
- Appreciate everyone being flexible, leaning in, and participating.
- Tech difficulties
- Very informative presentations!
- Learned a lot about where the FTC has come from and the background on the CRR fund.
- Appreciated the use of the chat function.

Quotable Quotes (listed in the order in which they were shared):

- From Carol: “The solution to pollution is dilution.” Dr. Sherry Rogers
- From Eric: “Only dead fish go with the flow.” Eric’s T-shirt
- From Josua: “Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather.” John Ruskin

Parking Lot

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