

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final MS Teams Public Meeting Summary
March 7, 2023 from 9:30 – 3:30

FTC Representative Attendees:

Travis Nelson	TPU
Bryce Glaser	WDFW
Jonathan Stumpf	TU

Additional Attendees:

John Serl	WDFW
Peggy Miller	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Sam Gibbons	WDFW
Todd Hillson	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Anja Huff	WDFW
Melora Shelton	TPU
Scott Gibson	TPU
Matt Peter	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Tim Hoffnagle	TPU
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Russell Page	LCPUD
Steve Manlow	LCFRB
Steve West	LCFRB
Tyanna Blaschak	USFS
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Michael Boyles	BPA
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

Public Attendees: Randy LeDuc, Jack Tipping, Larry Pryor, and Debbie Carlson

2023 FTC Meeting Dates: April 4 (in person), May 2, June 6, (No meeting in July), August 1, September 5, October 3, November 7, December 5

Approval of February Meeting Summary

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

Announcements

- We were pleased to welcome Tyanna Blaschak to the FTC. She is the Watershed and Hydropower Program Manager (Detail) for the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. She has worked for FS as a hydrologist and geologist for 10 years. She also does recreational caving. Oh, and she discovered a new species of pseudo-scorpion endemic to a specific lava tube. The paper describing it was published in 2021 or 2022.

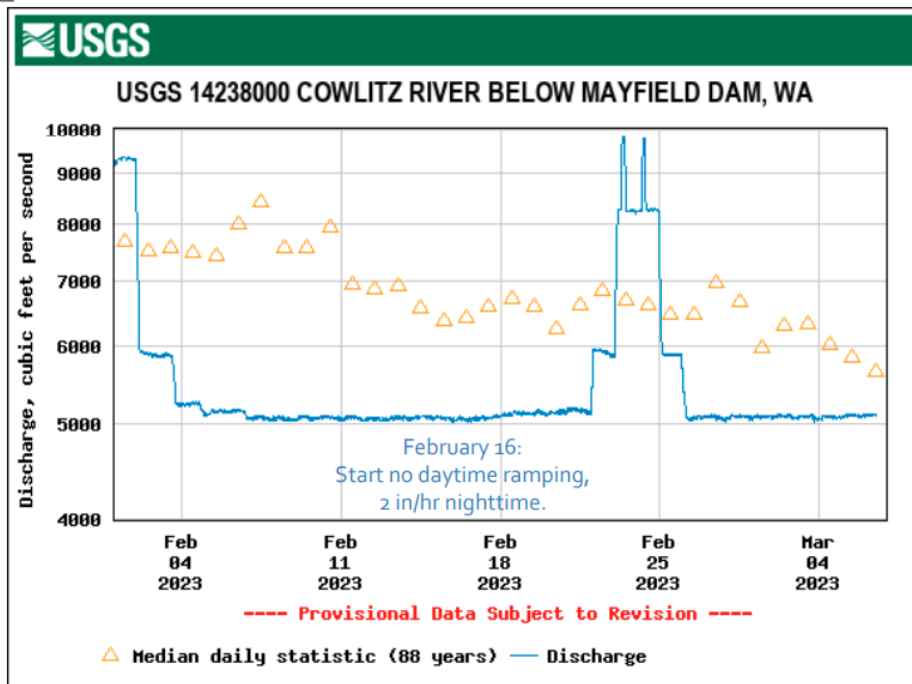
- We were also pleased that Anja Huff of WDFW is joining the FTC. Anja is the Hatchery Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) lead WDFW's Region 5. She enjoys travel. She got her master's degree in Scotland (has that in common with Melora).

Updates

Hydro Operations (presentation emailed before the meeting):

- Inflows: Melora noted inflows have been consistently low through the 2023 water year: 51% of the historical average in February and below normal to date for March. Recent drivers include very low precipitation (January) and below normal temperatures (February) during which precipitation contributed more to snowpack than streamflow.
- Storage: Riffe Lake elevation has drafted from 696' to 686' since February 1. It is about 40' below the long-term historical average.
- Snowpack: Building steadily and currently at 93% of average at Paradise and 103% at White Pass.
- Outflows: Discharge near 5,000 cfs minimum flow, except during recent regional cold snap. No ramp or flow exceedances; ramp restrictions below 6,000 cfs changed February 16 to 0 in/hr daytime and -2 in/hr nighttime.
- 10-Day forecast: Cooler and wetter than typical with snow level variable below 2,500'. Riffe may continue to draft or start to stabilize. Weekly spring fish transport flows have started (~6,200 cfs this week). Otherwise discharge likely will be maintained near the minimum flow of 5,000 cfs.

Outflow



• Minimum flow 5,000 cfs. No flow or ramp exceedances (critical flow 6,000 cfs).

Link to the USGS real-time Cowlitz River hydrograph:

- https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site_no=14238000&PARAMeter_cd=00060,00065
- <https://www.mytpu.org/community-environment/parks-recreation/river-flows-lake-levels/>

Water Quality/Monitoring:

Gravel: Matt P noted flows remain too high for gravel photos to show distribution. Stay tuned.

North Taidnapam Boat launch DNS was finalized March 6 and will go out for permitting along with JARPA.

Matt also noted Tacoma will try to keep full-spectrum material within the river system and not pull it out of the system. They are in contact with WDFW and Ecology on this.

Fish Facilities:

Separator:

- Eric reported this is a slow time of year with generally fewer than 30 fish per day.
- Winter Steelhead brood collection is generally going well, collecting Upper Cowlitz River and Tilton brood, completed Lower-Cowlitz collection.
- They are seeing primarily winter steelhead with a few spring Chinook trickling in. There were no spring Chinook this week though.

Mayfield

- Mayfield still shut down but will be re-opening on April 1st. Tags have been ordered, along with the tagging machines. Additional clean up and prep will take place the last week of March.
- On March 8, Tacoma will meet with consultants and staff from the Tacoma Hydro Project and Engineering Department to kick off the scoping of the Mayfield Juvenile Bypass remodel.

CFFF

- The hiring process is underway for Chris Foster's replacement.
- Seasonal staff have been hired and Tacoma is looking to hire an additional 3-month position for assistance during peak outmigration.
- The smolt transport tank was upgraded with insulated side panels (should be beneficial during Chinook outmigration in summer).
- Crews are wrapping up maintenance projects this week.
- The facility will be watered up this week in preparation for March 15 start up.

Cispus Release Site: Laura reminded all she has been meeting with the USFS to work through some edits to a special use permit. After that is finalized, they will meet with all involved parties and start the expedited HPA process (a regular HPA usually takes 45 days, but an expedited HPA will take 15 days) – hoping it lines up with when the timing of the special use permit. All parties are working hard to streamline the process. It will likely take a few weeks before everything is wrapped up. Stay tuned.

Monitoring & Evaluation Subgroup: The recent focus of this group has been coming up with a classification system for prioritizing studies for the monitoring plan. An issue has been identified with coho parr – more are being captured at Cowlitz Falls since CWT tagging was moved from Cowlitz to Mayfield. It may be possible to PIT tag a portion of parr and, through monitoring, figure out if it's better to release parr upstream of Cowlitz Falls or downstream of Mayfield going forward. The subgroup postponed discussion on this. They would like to see a more detailed proposal to determine if this is something that can be implemented this year.

- Action Item: Travis and Bryce to follow up with Matt B re Tacoma's thoughts on how best to move forward with the M&E Subgroup. How to move it forward.

2023 FTC Work Plan/Protocols: Travis sent out the updated draft prior to this meeting. The new draft includes the review schedule and notes all FTC meetings are now open to the public. Otherwise, he didn't propose any changes to the protocols since the major rewrite two years ago.

- Action Item: All to give Travis feedback on the 2-23 Work Plan before the April meeting.

Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group (TWG)

Presenter: Matt Peter

John noted this group met briefly since the last FTC meeting. Gabe was on vacation and they didn't cover much new ground. The CF Fish Facility will open up March 15. They expect to get some smolt numbers by the April FTC Meeting. The report for the last smolt season should be out by March 10 for a 30-day FTC review (concurrent with the TWG). Matt P will follow up with Matt B on the DD.

Annual Program Review (APR) Process for 2023

Presenter: Matt Peter

No report at this time other than it will be similar to what Matt, Eric and John did last year. This means holding the Science Meeting in the AM and APR Meeting in the PM where targets will be set for each program on the Cowlitz.

LCPUD Dam Operations

Presenter: Russell Page

Russell reported the PUD is installing a new TDG monitor in preparation for data collection when Tacoma starts fish collection. Joe First is working with Ecology on how best to capture the data moving forward.

Operations update: They are moving forward on the three large construction projects:

- Debris barrier restoration – The coating replacement and protection project is planned for 2025-2026. They should receive the permit shortly. This will give them an idea of the schedule for moving the debris barrier to the moorage site and then doing the drawdown for that work.
- Sluice gate replacement – Design is nearly complete. Will then move to construct.
- Crane rail extension project – Going out for bid for contractors. Work to begin soon.

This year they will be removing hatch covers and replacing the seals on both units. On May 19 they will start work on Unit 1 and take out the fish collection above that unit. On July 14 they will move on to Unit 2 with completion of the entire project in mid-to-late August.

Action Item: Russell to let Tacoma know when the outage schedule has been established.

Satellite Rearing Program

Presenter: Eric Shoblom

Eric gave a presentation for the Satellite Rearing Ponds describing the preferred alternative at Energy Northwest's (EN) Packwood Project stilling basin, sideboards for consideration, production, and how proposed infrastructure will meet the sideboards and WDFW comments. He also reviewed the benefits associated with the EN site and how it mimics the observed life history strategy of NOR fish.

The FTC discussed how best to share the presentation with the public and the timetable for receiving public comments. Once public comments are received Eric will prepare a Decision Document recording the FTC selection of the initial site for the Satellite Rearing Pond along with supporting rationale, proposed operation and production, how comments / concerns from the FTC and the public were considered / addressed and also next steps such as incorporating kelt reconditioning as phase 2.

Eric also noted he is working on an easement and access agreement with EN and hopes to have all concerns addressed by/at the April FTC meeting.

Action Items:

- Eric: Send out WDFW's comments from the workshop with Tacoma notes to the FTC today.
 - Eric: Add clarifying language to the PPT shared with the FTC at today's meeting and send out to FTC and public by March 22. Include that future options could include kelt reconditioning. Mention the other the two sites originally considered and how the EN site has been selected as the preferred option.
 - All: Provide comments / feedback prior to the April FTC meeting
 - Eric: Introduce the Decision Document (DD) indicating that Tacoma is moving forward with the EN site at the April FTC meeting.
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CF Northshore Collector (CFNSC) Evaluation Recommendations

Presenter: Matt P

Matt noted Tacoma is short-handed with getting the annual report distributed for review for Northshore Collector. Gabe will be sending out an updated timeline.

Annual Report: Gabe recently got the report back from the consultant and it is currently under Tacoma internal review. The report will be out to the FTC for comment prior to the March meeting. The TWG review will be concurrent with the FTC. Time is of the essence as the season starts March 15. A DD will also be coming out soon.

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

Presenters: Melora Shelton and Steve West

Melora reported Tacoma filed the CRR report with FERC. She also noted the Cowlitz Tribe's Cispus-Yellow Jacket Project Phase 3 will be moving forward this summer.

HAP: Grant round notice was distributed through FTC channels last month, and draft applications are due by noon April 4. Tacoma's Communications team will include information about the grant round in an electronic newsletter soon. Melora is keeping the HAP Subgroup meetings scheduled for coordination if there are enquiries from potential applicants.

Habitat: The Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SFRB) and CRR habitat grant round is in process. Steve W noted there are three more weeks in the schedule for pre-proposal meetings and reviewed the grant round calendar (previously distributed). Draft applications are due by noon April 3. Virtual site visits (when applicants present their proposals) will be on April 27, 28, and May 2-4. FTC members can attend CRR virtual site visits to hear presentations, ask questions, and provide feedback.

Steve briefly described four potential projects that may pursue CRR funding. Cascade Forest Conservancy and the Cowlitz Indian Tribe are both looking to fund next phases of work previously awarded CRR funds (Cowlitz Tribe likely with the USFS). There are also 2 potential projects below the barrier dam, a culvert replacement in a tributary confluence area (tidally influenced) and a chum assessment (WDFW).

Public Comment Period #1 - Agenda related

Larry (from the Chat during the meeting)

- Do you use any sedatives, salt, or other during transport?
Eric: We do not use sedatives but have used salt in transport at times when fish are highly sensitive, such as at Mayfield when Chinook smolts arrive in very poor condition.
- What water testing for influent has been done for the new site?
Eric: Water testing at EN is pending and will include temp, D.O., pH, and TDG.
- Will those fish be marked?
Eric: Yes, we're proposing to have 100% coded wire tag, but this is still a programmatic decision. We may use PIT tags as well.?
- What are the release numbers you're shooting for?
Eric: The current proposed program is 100,000 at 23fpp.
- What are your Adult Return Goals (ARGs) for the satellite facilities?
Eric: We do not have ARG's for satellite rearing facilities.
- Do satellite release numbers or poundage in any way effect lower hatchery release responsibilities?
Eric: Fish release numbers and poundage are not included in our FERC 650K lb. cap.
- Where do you get your eggs from?
Eric: The current proposal collects eggs from hatchery rack returns. HOR x HOR crosses first with integrated stocks planned for the future.
- Who's staffing the facility and who are their bosses?
Eric: The facility would be staffed by Tacoma and their contractors with potential to invite volunteers for community outreach. TBD.

Randy:

- Why is there no cover at the proposed SR pond? (Will check with Eric on this)
- Chum salmon reintroduction (In touch with Bryce and Jack on this. Save this discussion for a future meeting.)

Jack:

- EN Rearing Pond: Wants to see a minimum standard of success attached to this. If unsuccessful, what do we have?
Travis: Reach out to Eric on this and/or Jack. Tacoma will share the comment response matrix.
Bryce: WDFW supports Jack's efforts on this.
- In 2016 Keith stated the Cowlitz Trout Hatchery renovations would begin in 2018 – status?
Travis: Tacoma is trying to hire someone to be the lead on this. While this idea stalled when Keith left Tacoma; it is still on the priority list. Travis will ask Matt B to follow up.
- Fall Chinook spawning survey this past fall. Have the new methodology results come in? Was the old method undercounting?
John S: Still working on the analysis. The same pattern held as last year. The actual data will be out soon.
Bryce: WDFW is interested in continuing this work – figuring out the different variabilities
- With the HAP proposals, keep in mind that sport fishermen depend on WDFW to implement a hatchery program. This includes using netpens so fish can be reared to a larger size. Can WDFW submit a proposal for such?
Bryce: This is in the APR, and we should see an update on plans for this.
- Suggested agenda topic for April 4 FTC meeting: Include Chum spawning channel as part of SR. We are on year 23 waiting for first SR pond.
Anja: Thanks for bringing this up.

Bryce: WDFW is considering putting in a SRFB proposal for an evaluation of the Lower Cowlitz for chum channel opportunities. He offered to follow up with Jack and Randy. The comment letter from WDFW as a potential SR site option has been shared with the FTC. It is envisioned that would happen as we move into the second and third SR sites.

Larry:

- Water quality changes below dams – hydrogen, pH, water hardness, parasites, etc. He is interested in hatchery success and also as a fisherman.
Matt P: Work from pre-licensing studies and License article 410. Summary report list all the things being monitored. He offered to send the report to Larry. Tacoma has completed all water quality monitoring except for TDG.
- Program in Packwood: Happy to hear of how this will mirror what seeing out of CF. Adult return goals – what SARs are there for NORs? Will those fish be marked? Mass marked? Will this affect poundage?
Travis: Likely they will be index marked – implanted with a tag. The focus is on the fishery but not at the cost of recovery.
- Will the public be able to fish on the fish from SR? Will we ever be able to keep wild Coho? Is Anja's position a new position for Region 5?
Sam: Anja's position as a Hatchery M&E biologist is part of a first round of hiring Biologist 4 positions. Anja's hire is the first of eight positions. She will be coordinating and implementing the Westside Monitoring Plan. She will help with a number of different projects. She formerly worked with the Hatchery Evaluation and Assessment Team in Olympia.
- In M&E, what's her measurement of success?
Sam: Adult return goals, SARS, etc.
The plan for westside M&E will outline these things:
 1. In-hatchery survival
 2. Out-of-hatchery survivalThere will be programmatic goals for each of the plans. There is no one-size-fits-all.
Anja: That's right. There are different parameters for success depending on a variety of factors.

Public Comment Period #2 – Not Agenda related

Randy:

- There are issues related to the Riffe Lake boat ramp. Both Monika and Matt B said would send data on this. He hasn't received anything yet. Fishermen need this information. Something needs to be done to get permitting so the boat ramp can be accessible / conducive for older fishermen.
Travis will follow up with Monika and Matt B on this to ensure Randy gets the information he has requested.

Topics for April 4, 2023 FTC Meeting – In person? At the Vets Museum in Chehalis?

(No hybrid option at that location)

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities
- LCPUD Cowlitz Falls Dam Operations
- Update on Cispus Release Site
- Satellite Rearing
- Downstream Adaptive Management TWG
- CRR Fund / HAP Subgroup

- M&E Subgroup
 - 2023 FTC Work Plan / Protocols
 - 2023 APR Process
 - Preview May FTC Meeting topics
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Meeting Evaluation

- Hoping to meet in person / possibly hybrid for next month.
 - Tacoma can be better prepared next time - dealing with transitions.
 - Excited to welcomed new members.
 - Good participation today
 - Four members of the public with us today – that’s a record!
 - Thanks for making these available for public participation.
 - Josua’s quote is from an intrepid explorer – someone who pushed the limits of technology, human ability, and stamina. The quote also pays tribute to International Women’s Day (March 8): “The most effective way to do it, is to do it.” Amelia Earhart
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Closing Remarks

Travis thanked everyone for their hard work and for attending the meeting today. He noted the need for all stakeholders to have a voice in FTC activities. He also appreciated Josua’s quote and notes one of his favorite quotes is “Whether you think you can or whether you think you can’t, you’re right.” Henry Ford

Parking Lot

- Presentation by Tacoma’s Power Management Group and/or from Grant PUD re improving SAR
- Review Steelhead Kelt Recycling Program