

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final Conference Call Meeting Summary
April 6, 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
Steve Manlow	LCFRB
Steve West	LCFRB
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Rudy Salakory	Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Debbie Carlson	BPA
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

2021 FTC Meeting Dates: May 4, June 1, July 6 (tentative), Aug. 3, Sept. 7, Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Dec. 7

Approval of Last Meeting Summary

The March FTC meeting summary was approved with edits and will be posted to the FTC public website.

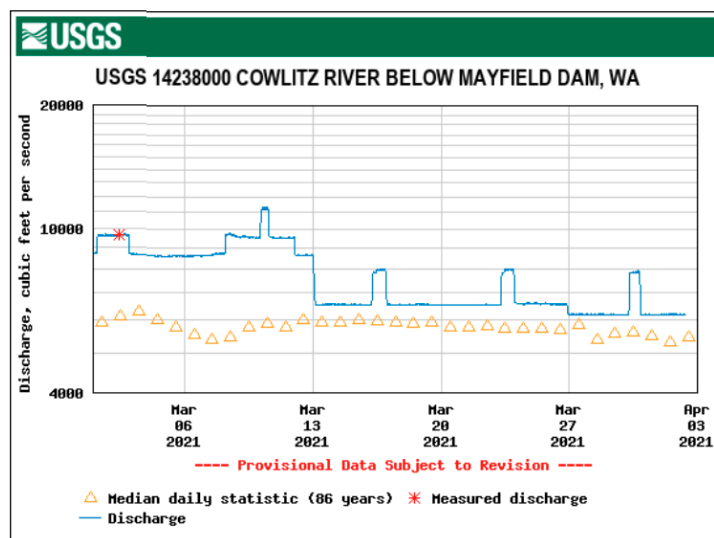
Updates

Hydro Operations:

- Inflows: While in February we saw typical inflows, in March, inflows were lower (5.5K cfs compared to the historical monthly average of 8.4K cfs). The historical average for April is 7.7K cfs. Inflows as of April 1 were 4.6K cfs.
- Snowpack remains high and continued to increase in March and Paradise and White Pass are currently at 138% and 146% of average respectively.
- Storage: Riffe Lake elevation as of April 1 was 707', much lower than the historical average of 733.5' and 1.5' lower than the drawdown average over the last three years.

- Mayfield Outflows: There were no minimum flow or ramp exceedances. Outflows as of April 2 were at 6.2K cfs. Tacoma is continuing to provide pulse flows (fish transport) on a weekly basis and will continue to provide a Minimum flow of 5K cfs through the end of June.
- Riffe Lake Elevation Update: Boat ramps closed on March 30 due to inaccessibility because of low lake elevation. There is angler concern as the current elevation is at 706' and boat launches at Riffe become unusable at 708'. Travis reported this will be an ongoing issue. Tacoma is also working to balance the need for low elevation to safely conduct Barrier Dam repairs vs the high snow pack. Carol is working with Matt Peter on how best to manage the ooze at Kosmos if elevations suddenly increase due to a Pineapple Express-type snow melt.
- Forecast: The 10-day outlook is typical, then cooler, and relatively dry. Freezing levels should be below 6K ' and inflows are expected to range from 5-6K cfs.

Outflow



No minimum flow or ramp exceedances; 4/2/2021: 6,190 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 reported last month, Ecology sent Tacoma an approval and concurrence letter to Tacoma related to the 2002 Water Quality Certification; this letter concludes all water quality parameters, except Total Dissolved Gas (TDG). Tacoma is awaiting Ecology’s review of the TDG Plan. Matt thanked Ecology and others for their collaboration in completing the summary of the water quality data and the cessation of monitoring was approved of by Ecology. All are in agreement now that the water quality monitoring needs at the Cowlitz River Project have been satisfied and the focus will now shift to the TDG plan that will require monitoring of all operational and storm spills. Carol also reported that she has a couple Water Quality Protection Plans (WQPP) awaiting her review for approval. The WQPP will be for the dredging at Blue Creek is top of the list to proceed after reviewing the TDG Monitoring Plan.

Fish Facilities: Eric reported for the Barrier Dam project they finished placing the rock in scour hole on March 8 (four days early). The contractor was completely demobilized by

March 11. Many thanks to the many different agencies, contractors and staff who worked together so well to complete this project.

The design team for the upgrade to the spillway project selected Shimmick Construction out of Bellevue. Pending Public Utility Board approval and contracting completion, they will mobilize as early as this May and start work on the coffer dam in mid-July.

Tacoma is currently collecting Winter Steelhead according to schedule and it looks like they will meet broodstock goals. Fishermen are having good success despite the low numbers coming into the separator.

Mayfield juvenile collection began on April 1 and just a handful of fish have been collected so far. The Cowlitz Falls collector started up on March 15 and they have collected ~200 smolts. These numbers are expected to increase as temperatures and flows increase. The Cowlitz Salmon hatchery has recently finished releasing their yearling Spring Chinook and are currently marking Fall Chinook. The Cowlitz Trout hatchery is in the process of releasing summer steelhead and will release the winter steelhead immediately thereafter.

Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group: Matt reported their last meeting was focused on wrapping up reporting and gearing up for the current season. The TWG has reviewed the Annual Report and it will be out this week to the FTC for a 30-day review.

2021 FTC Workplan: Travis projected the updated version of the Workplan and welcomed additional comments/suggested edits. He combined the plan with the FTC protocols, noting the protocols should be revisited to include remote meeting procedures. He separated out the monthly updates schedule from the scheduled updates. Table 2 shows the 30-day review (typically send at least 45 days before the filing). Additional suggestions:

- Show which plans are complete. For plans not finished, show when the last one was.
- Show periodic M&E presentations. Do this also for TWG and HOM. These will be adjusted over time.
- At one point, each subgroup was going to write an annual work plan noting what they've done and what they anticipate for the coming year. We will add this and check on it twice a year. Include subgroup reports in the FTC annual Work plan.

Action Item:

- Travis: Integrate feedback and send out an updated version for approval by April 20 for approval at the May meeting.

Gravel Augmentation: Travis emailed out DD 2021-01 that was approved at the Feb. 2 FTC meeting. He also emailed out and displayed a proposed outline and crosswalk from the original 2004 FERC approved Gravel Augmentation Plan including proposed 2021 updates. He described the outline as the “first blush” of where Tacoma has been and where they intend to go. He noted that even if the FTC doesn't finalize the plan, it is important that we coordinate on this to ensure we are all on the same page before gravel placement starts on Barrier Island (after approval of the HPA – likely this summer). Carol noted the HPA will have the WQPP attached. Matt Peter is working with the Corps on a Programmatic Permit.

Action Items:

- All: Please send any comments to Travis and Melora on the outline between now and the May Meeting.
- Travis: Draft new long-term Gravel Augmentation Plan document and send out to all before the May meeting.

Travis closed by assuring everyone that the Jorgensen site is still in the mix, though there is no update since the March meeting.

North of Falcon Meeting: Josua reported on the April 1 North of Falcon Columbia River Fisheries meeting which outlined forecasted numbers, season proposals, and supporting logic. WDFW presented proposed fishery rules for tributaries. They are cautiously optimistic as they anticipate a robust return of 1.5 million coho to the Columbia. They are proposing a bag limit of three adipose clipped adult coho per day for the Cowlitz. They will adaptively manage the program throughout the season, depending on whether the hatchery return is adequate to meet broodstock goals and transport to upper basin. They are also awaiting public input on their recommendations. The coho retention rule for the Cowlitz will be similar to Lewis and Kalama. Although, on the Cowlitz, there will be a closure for fall Chinook. Josua provided the following links for more information:

See the meeting materials list (handout and trib proposals) for forecasted numbers, season proposals and logic.

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/get-involved/calendar/event/north-falcon-columbia-river-fisheries-discussion-0>

Columbia mainstem proposal is from the Recreational Breakout

https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/2021_col_river_fishery_proposals.pdf

M&E Subgroup Report

Presenter: Phil Sandstrom

Phil displayed the Workplan document and explained it will be included in the FHMP as an appendix. The March 31 M&E meeting resulted in good discussions which included wrapping up the Spring Chinook SAR exercise. They are now ready to look at other species (also covered the Workplan). He thanked WDFW for their many comments which made the Workplan more robust. Members from the Downstream Adaptive Management TWG joined the M&E Subgroup for this review of Spring Chinook study designs.

They also reviewed the APR and AOP process.

The Science Meeting is planned to occur on May 19. At the end of the meeting, he sent out a Doodle Poll for next Analytics Meeting near the end of July. Lyn forwarded the Doodle link to the FTC as all are invited to attend.

At the next M&E Subgroup Meeting on April 21, they will identify missing topics and develop a prioritization matrix. At the May 4 FTC meeting will review Workplan templates and list of projects (line12). We will also review/approve the accompanying DD. Based on the prioritization matrix, they will determine if additional workshops need to be scheduled. The rest of the tasks listed in the table will be TBD.

Action Items:

- Phil: Send out a draft DD by April 20 for approval at the May FTC meeting.
 - All: Review the DD and send any comments to Phil before May Meeting.
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FHMP: Next Steps

Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt reported that the workshops are proceeding according to schedule. Transition planning for Winter Steelhead last met on March 24. (He sent those materials along with materials for April 14 meeting a few hours after this meeting.) WDFW's harvest strategy will be incorporated into the draft Transition Plan. They are also reviewing the M&E Workplan.

They spent the majority of the time talking about Cowlitz program options and alternatives. Options discussed include:

- Doubling integrated programs in the Tilton and Upper Basin
- Increasing abundance by expanding egg take for upper river integrated program and then culling out undesirable fish (those not likely to smolt) with the goal of increasing the SAR.

They will compare the pros and cons along with assumptions for both options. Thomas and Phil are working on this and will bring a list back for review by all at the April 14 mtg.

Winter Steelhead Goals include:

- Increasing abundance for the Upper Cowlitz/Cispus and Tilton basins, including increased abundance of HORs for transport during the reintroduction phase.
- Move return timing earlier for the lower river program and expand overall duration of the combined hatchery program returns.
Increasing angling opportunity

Matt will incorporate this into the rest of the document as he did with fall Chinook. They will begin on the Spring Chinook Transition Plan on the 14th as well, starting with a background information created by Tim. They also have supplemental info (SAR evaluation) that they can integrate into this transition plan. This population is also in the abundance building phase and there is a need to optimize size at and time of release strategies to increase abundance for upstream transport.

Satellite Rearing / Response to Herrera Beutler Letter to FERC

Presenter: Matt Bleich

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

Matt walked through the draft letter from Tacoma to FERC in response to the letter sent to FERC by Congresswoman Jamie Herrera Beutler. Matt reminded all that while this is Tacoma's letter, they are seeking agreement on tone and sentiment. Bryce didn't see any red flags, noting he appreciated language in Satellite Rearing Facilities which reflects comments from WDFW. The four steps listed combine what the FTC is doing and where we are going with the program.

Tacoma Power solicited public comments on the Satellite Rearing Facility Plan and we received comments between November 16, 2020 and January 19, 2021. Comments were received from five members of the public, Lewis County Public Utility District, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. These comments were discussed at the Fisheries Technical Committee (FTC) on February 2, 2021. Next steps identified at the meeting included: 1) an assessment of the current Cowlitz Hatchery Complex to evaluate if modifications to facilities for similar costs can meet similar recovery and harvest outcomes as Satellite Rearing Facilities; 2) an assessment of how Satellite facilities support recovery by conducting a status review of Upper Cowlitz populations; 3) an upper basin satellite site assessment; and 4) the development of a schedule for public participation that would inform the development of plans and land use agreements.

There was discussion around the hatchery production requirement, which is of most concern to the public. It was noted the CRR funds may also be used for production projects if they are intended for recovery.

Improving Survival Rates of Hatchery Fish: Much on this is included in the FHMP and the FTC will be working with the public on this (they have voiced concerns with pinnipeds and birds).

Satellite Rearing: Travis and Matt will check to see that the comments have been posted. The FTC will see recommendations in the form of a workplan. Matt noted if we pivot to a different approach than described in the current draft plan, there wouldn't be any benefit to finalizing that plan.

Annual Program Review (APR)

Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt reminded all the APR is a process we agreed to as per the following SA Articles:

- Article 3: Abandoning volitional passage and instituting CRR funding for HAP and HAB projects
- Article 5: Fish production and hatcheries (up to 650 lbs. of release and how to mix)
- Article 6: FHMP including evaluation for monitoring, adjustments based on fish passage, SARs, adult returns, etc.

This year's APR process will start with a (virtual) public meeting on May 19 where they (Phil) will start by discussing the Annual Operating Plan for production per the FHMP and the science to back it up and then, after a break, Bryce and Matt will do the APR portion of the meeting. They will work with Sam and Eric re the production mix and will present recommendations for changes in upcoming year (Chapter 12 of FHMP) and get feedback from the public. They will also provide an update on the Transition Plans, which should be complete by the end of the summer.

The public comments will be reviewed at the June 1 (public meeting) to determine if changes need to be made to production strategy. The third meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 23. Bryce, Matt, and Sam will let the public know if, how (and why/why not) their feedback has been incorporated into plans for this year. They will also provide update on transition plans.

Next steps: Phil will forward draft agenda to Bryce to review.

2021 CRR Program Update

Presenters: Steve Manlow and Travis Nelson

Steve and Travis have been discussing a strategy to restart the CRR program through a partnership between LCFRB and Tacoma Power. They walked through a PowerPoint Presentation that outlined opportunities and considerations for the 2021 CRR program. Travis notes this is being presented to the FTC as an opportunity. If FTC wants to move forward, discussions will continue. Travis will send out a DD for review at the next FTC meeting.

Habitat (HAB) Projects: Tacoma Power proposes to engage the LCFRB for the 2021 grant round. Support for this proposal by FTC would be requested in the DD at the May meeting. The opportunity is for a service from LCFRB to provide process and ranking support to Tacoma for the CRR program beginning in 2021 for habitat restoration projects in the Cowlitz watershed. This service would be funded out of Tacoma coffers separately from the CRR escrow account. The LCFRB would rank projects and present the rankings to the FTC for consideration. The LCFRB would run the CRR process parallel with the LCFRB process

already underway. When asked if we would be “joining the party” a little late for this year, Steve explained there is a design process for the Cispus and Upper Cowlitz (by the Learning Center) that is eligible for funding this year and then we could catch up to the entire LCFRB grant round process in 2022.

Tacoma would maintain \$3 million /biennium funding rate through 2034-2035. The FTC would identify an equitable split of CRR Funds between HAB and HAP projects and revisit the split periodically.

Hatchery Type (HAP) Projects: Tacoma would run the grant rounds for production projects by supporting HAP subcommittee made up of production experts that could include membership beyond the FTC. The HAP round would start in June (could use existing framework and would allow six months before making an award). It would be necessary to identify who would be part of that process, etc. Another option would be to wait until December of this year. Regardless of the timing, Melora would be available for production-related proposals to assist as needed. The FTC would approve the HAP round process. All HAP projects would require a sponsor (FTC or natural resource agency). To avoid any conflict of interest, project sponsors would likely recuse themselves when voting on their own projects.

The HAP Subcommittee would include production experts and would create a ranking of projects to be presented to FTC in the same manner LCFRB would present HAB proposals. The FTC would then have a one-day meeting that would include HAP and Habitat projects for funding decisions.

Discussion:

- We need to decide how to proceed by May and memorialize with DD.
- If the FTC wants to proceed, Steve will propose doing so at their board meeting on May 7.
- In the full grant round for 2022, we would see all the LCFRB projects including where the Cowlitz projects ranked relative to each other as well as to the others in the region.
- The LCFRB always ranks projects according to:
 - Benefits to fish; certainty of success; cost relative to benefitsProjects that don't include all three are deemed as projects of concern by the State Review Panel and are not funded.
- On the HAP side of things: June seems too quick. There is still work to do internally with the FTC to approve the plan and identify the appropriate equitable split. There were some things identified in the hatchery project review criteria that need to be reviewed/revised before doing another round.
- There would be some WDFW involvement in the panel – concern with time commitment due to all the FHMP transition planning.
- We don't want to get out in front of the Transition Plans. Maybe consider smaller pilot projects? December seems more realistic. Want to make sure we get it right. If concerned about habitat projects getting ahead of production projects (project proponents being upset), then we could explain how we are working on the process to review and fund projects. The habitat projects may be more sophisticated and easier to gear up than the production projects.
- During initial CRR projects, it was assumed that for any hatchery production projects to be brought forward, there would have to have been many discussions with WDFW

and Tacoma already, e.g., net pen production (pending permitting). When we solicit for proposals, it is important to be very clear about what types of projects we are seeking and how all of this would mesh with the Transition Planning process.

- The account has \$18M in it now and we have 15 years left on the license.
- Take FTC protocols into account when discussing composition of subcommittee. Don't want an overly complicated selection process.
- How best to incorporate public comment into the process? The CRR implementation strategy DD needs to be updated and approved again. Steve may need to bring that document to his Board.

All agreed it would be good to go to May 19 APR meeting with alignment on direction.

Next steps: FTC consider proposal and decide on CRR program future by May:

- Equitable split (decide before June Public FTC meeting)
 - Does split apply just for next grant round? Next 15 years?
- Will you be a sponsor?
- How will voting work?
- HAB projects: Join the LCFRB process now?
- HAP projects: Kick off in June or December?

Steve M thanked everyone and said he and Steve West welcomes any questions on the LCFRB grant round process.

Action Item: Travis to send out draft DD with LCFRB running the HAB grant rounds by April 20 to be reviewed and approved at the May FTC Meeting.

Potential Topics for May 4 FTC Meeting

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities, Satellite Rearing Update, Downstream Adaptive Mgt. TGW
 - TPU Flow Planning Presentation (?)
 - 2021 FTC Work Plan
 - FHMP Transition Plans
 - APR Meeting
 - CRR Program: Review Draft DD for 2021 Grant Round
 - M&E Subgroup
 - Gravel Augmentation (?)
 - Preview June Public FTC Meeting topics
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Meeting Evaluation

- Great attendance
- Appreciated the puns (They are like auditory emojis)
- Happy that FTC discussions on CRR have restarted
- Josua's quote on kindness from an anonymous/unknown author: "It's nice to be important, but more important to be nice."

Parking Lot

- Review/Update FTC Protocols to include remote meeting procedures
- Presentation by Tacoma's Power Management Group
- Review Steelhead Recycling Program