

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final MS Teams Meeting Summary
May 2, 2023 from 9:30 – 3:30

FTC Representative Attendees:

Travis Nelson	TPU
Anne Baxter	Ecology
Peggy Miller (for Bryce Glaser)	WDFW
Jonathan Stumpf	TU

Additional Attendees:

John Serl	WDFW
Sam Gibbons	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Matt Peter	TPU
Scott Gibson	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Melora Shelton	TPU
Tim Hoffnagle	TPU
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Tyanna Blaschak	USFS
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Michael Boyles	BPA
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

Public Attendees: Larry Pryor

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

Approval of April Meeting Summary

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

Announcement

- Eric reminded all Tacoma will soon be posting the opening for Gabe McGuire’s former position (Assistant Manager of the CF Fish Facility). All were asked to let any potential candidates know.

Updates

Gravel Augmentation Plan

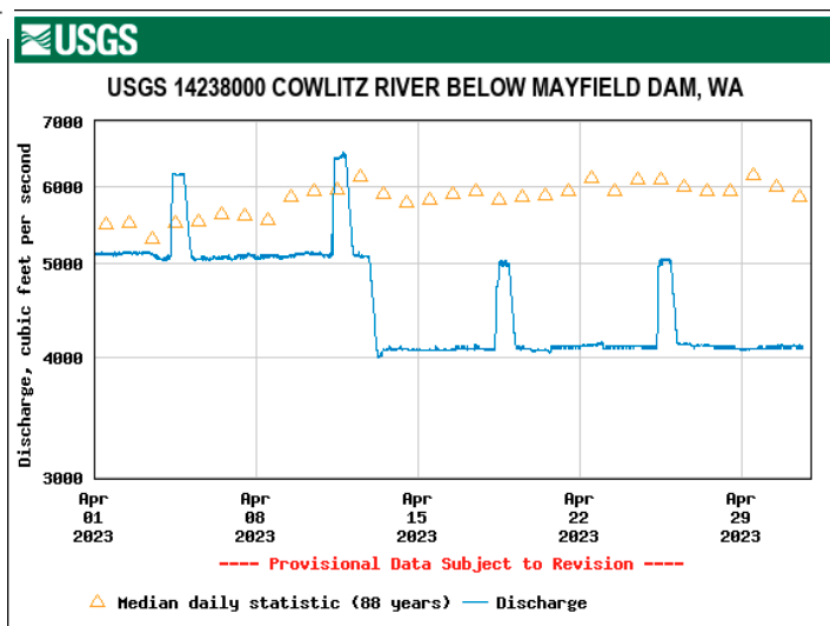
Melora asked everyone to be the lookout in the next few days for an updated Gravel Plan supplement for 30-day review. She provided a brief overview of plan development and review since the FTC finalized DD 2021-01, which described long- and short-term actions to License Article 10 obligations. This included FTC review of document structure and initial draft in 2021, and further coordination with WDFW in 2022. Tacoma appreciated very much Peggy working with them to address comments. Tacoma will send out the draft plan for 30-day review by May 5 and looks

forward to discussions at the June FTC meeting. At that meeting Tacoma will bring a draft high-level DD for FTC consideration. The final DD will be presented for approval at the August meeting and sent with the Plan supplement to FERC.

Hydro Operations (presentation emailed on May 1)

- Inflows: After low monthly inflows for WY 2023 through March, April came in at 98% of average. April precipitation likely contributed more toward snowpack than inflows until the end of the month due to colder than normal weather. Tilton sideflows were above the median for most of the month.
- Storage: Riffe Lake elevation on May 1 was 699' which is well below the 2017-2022 average. This deficit should be made up soon due to melting snowpack.
- Snowpack: This is near or above normal and has begun to melt at some locations.
- Outflows: The minimum flow was reduced from 5K to 4K (both with Fish Transport Flows, FTFs) on April 12, in accordance with the spring flow reduction DD approved at the last meeting. Weekly FTFs are pulsing from about 4.1K to 5K. There were no flow exceedances. There was a ramp exceedance on April 11 during an unplanned unit transfer, resulting in a brief 1.6" downramp over 45 minutes. The cause and measures to avoid this in the future will be included in the annual Article 402 report to FERC.
- Forecast: Initially drier/warmer, then typical temperatures and precipitation for the next ten days. Boat access to Riffe Lake should resume in the next 1-2 weeks. Tacoma will update the public accordingly.

Outflow



Minimum flow reduced to 4,000 cfs + fish transport flows on 4/12.
 No flow 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/>

Spring 2023 Minimum Flow Reduction

Tacoma has been operating under a minimum flow reduction since April 12. Per the decision document, Tacoma Power and the M&E group have been performing fish stranding monitoring

following transport flows during the minimum flow reduction period. Results of these surveys will be shared with the FTC weekly. A separate update on refill is coming every other week. Melora shared this summary slide:

Flow Reduction, Riffe Refill

- Reduced flows helped to conserve April precipitation and runoff
- Riffe Lake is up more than 27 ft since 4/6 (low of 671.3 ft)
- Mid-April rain and late-April snowmelt improved conditions; snowpack is at/above average
- Near-term outlook indicates substantial inflows
- NOAA CPC Climate outlook leans warmer and drier through July
- Current refill probability (RFC Inflow, Weather Years 1981-2022) is 95% (only one scenario in which 748 ft is not achieved)
- If near-term inflows materialize and Riffe continues to fill, Tacoma Power may increase the reduced minimum flow or end the minimum flow reduction before June 30th.

Discussion:

- Anne requested the update also include a comparison of the charts with predicted refill probabilities from Leah's presentation at the June meeting to the current. Peggy requested the updates include exceedance curves. Melora responded that Tacoma will take these requests into consideration.
- Melora reiterated the flow reduction is doing what everyone hoped it would do - increasing the probability of refill under a number of different scenarios. After the next two weeks, Tacoma will be in a better place to determine if they can make adjustments to return more water to the river. Sometime before June 30 we can look at eliminating the reduced minimum flow. Peggy asked if there would be a need for a DD to return to 5K cfs. All agreed this would not be necessary. Anne noted while she very much appreciates all the work Tacoma is doing trying to keep the flows at the 5K minimum, she also thinks there is room for improvement.

Water Quality/Monitoring

- Kosmos: Matt reported Tacoma is in a pattern of weekly monitoring including ground water monitoring at least through the end of the year. They will eventually move to clean-up action.
- Dredging Operations: Intake dredging is planned at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery and also at the ladder at Blue Creek to keep the water from going over the banks. These operations will require HPAs.
- North Taidnapam Boat Launch: Currently awaiting a permit from the Corps. This project likely won't be complete until after the summer as reservoir levels will reduce again. Tacoma is exploring the lower-level parking. There are potential cultural resource concerns there which they hope to be able to work through so they can address the accessibility concern for older fishermen expressed by Randy LeDuc at the April FTC meeting).
- Tacoma installed vertical temp monitoring arrays off the debris deflector in front of the CF dam. Matt will give an update on this at the June FTC meeting.
- Gravel augmentation associated with the barrier dam construction will be captured in the Gravel Augmentation Plan which is coming out soon for review. Peggy suggested Tacoma start working on 2024 Corps permits as soon as possible.

Fish Facilities

Separator:

- The drop in last week's steelhead numbers (to 305) was a bit earlier than normal.
- 43 spring Chinook returned last week. Those numbers are expected to continue to increase.

Brood Collection:

- WDFW has reported we have enough winter steelhead on hand to satisfy all three brood programs.
- 175 spring Chinook have been collected so far for broodstock. It looks like we are in good shape to catch up to where we want to be by the end of the week.

Mayfield Counting House:

- Eric reported on the new tagging protocol where all Chinook and coho are getting snout tagged and steelhead and cutthroat are getting dorsal tagged.
- Collection is off to a slow start due to the colder temperatures. As occurred at Cowlitz Falls, expectations are for a jump in collection associated with warmer temps and increased flows.
- Chinook smolts are currently looking much healthier. Nematodes are likely responsible for their poor condition noted at the April FTC meeting.
- WDFW planted 1K juvenile (10-12") tiger muskies in Mayfield on May 1.

CF Fish Facility:

- Tacoma moved into 750 cfs tailrace discharge on April 29. LCPUD spilled up to 2,500 cfs over turbine capacity that same day. This impacts the floor geometry setting. The protocol is to revert back to the baseline and pause the study when such events occur.
- The current FCE so far for 3 release groups is at 50%.
- Crews are busy dealing with a lot of fine debris (pine needles, etc.).
- Flows exceeding 15,00 cfs at Randle over turbine capacity this weekend would trigger additional spill.
- More release groups of steelhead and coho for the FCE will occur this week.
- Comments on the Annual Report, after a 30-day review, were due May 1. Eric expressed appreciation for the feedback received from WDFW. The final report, including those comments, should be out by the end of May.

Cispus Release Site

Eric reported he has been working with LCPUD, the USFS, and WDFW to expedite a temporary repair to this site (for this year only). Last week they got a USFS Special Use Permit for work at that site. He expressed appreciation for the great teamwork and collaboration in this effort. Next steps: LCPUD will reach out to a contractor. Laura noted they haven't secured the HPA yet. LCPUD is making sure they have all the necessary permits for working on federal land. They may have to go through the SEPA process. At this point, it looks like this will occur in summer. For the work to occur, flows need to be as low as possible.

Monitoring & Evaluation Subgroup

The last meeting was canceled. Another meeting has been scheduled. Tacoma is planning to bring in Four Peaks to help with this effort. Stay tuned.

Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group (TWG)

At the last meeting of this group on April 25, John brought up the performance metric passage in the Biological Opinion that was incorporated into the license. The group thought the full FTC group should review and determine the meaning and direction of this passage related to the issues of secondary collection and timelines to meet performance goals. This could be a discussion topic at the June FTC meeting.

Annual Program Review (APR) Process for 2023

Presenter: Eric Shoblom

Tacoma is still finalizing the contract with the contractor to help with the APR meeting and the Science Meeting (usually held on the same day). The contract is being routed for approval. That contractor will help establish the timeline. Could the Science meeting which is usually in person count as one of the quarterly FTC in-person meetings?

Riffe Lake Seismicity

Presenter: Travis Nelson

On April 27, Travis emailed out a link to the first edition of Tacoma's Cowlitz River Project eNewsletter. The newsletter included an update on Mossy Rock seismicity studies. [Read about them here](#). Travis reminded all Tacoma's objective is to bring Riffe Lake back to full pool.

Current Status:

- Tacoma consultants submitted their Seismic Hazard Analysis, along with a time history analysis, to FERC. They are revising both based on the regulator's comments.
 - Tacoma created a preliminary computer model and is incorporating the results from conducting physical performance testing at Mossyrock Dam to improve the model.
 - They are evaluating other items that could delay raising the lake, including a seismic analysis of the dam's embankment, the Kosmos Flats site cleanup, and shoreline vegetation management. Although some progress has been made, they are years away from having a definitive solution and don't anticipate any type of potential construction to occur until at least 2030. In the meantime, they are exploring alternatives to mitigate risk.
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LCPUD Dam Operations

Presenter: Russell Page

This report is deferred to the June FTC Meeting as Russell was unable to attend this meeting.

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

2023 FTC Work Plan/Protocols

Presenter: Travis Nelson

Work Plan: Travis noted the updated version sent out on May 1 included edits suggested at the April FTC meeting. This was approved by voting members.

Protocols: The updated version of the Protocols (to indicate all FTC meetings are open to the public and will be held in person on a quarterly basis) was sent out on April 25. This document was also approved with Peggy's suggestion we add a section to distinguish between public participation and attendance. She also suggested we update the Decision-making flow chart to reflect our current process.

Action Items:

- Travis: Send both documents out to voting members not at this meeting for electronic concurrence.
 - Lyn: Update the flow chart in the Protocols.
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Satellite Rearing Program

Presenter: Eric Shoblom

Eric sent out the public presentation which incorporated history and context for review. He appreciated receiving a letter of support from Randy LeDuc (CCA). Tacoma is continuing to work on an access agreement with Energy Northwest (EN) and will be meeting with regulators soon to get their perspective on EN's obligations, etc. Last week Tacoma sent a survey crew out to EN to help inform the design. The timeline for construction of the facility depends on how long it takes to get easement going and feedback from regulators.

Eric walked through the draft Decision Document (DD) 2023-03 which supplements DD2022-07a, 2022-07, and 2021-07. He expressed appreciation for the feedback provided by Bryce. The decision for consideration regards the pursuit of rearing sub-yearling spring Chinook and kelt reconditioning in addition to Options 2 & 5 (provided by R2). This DD seeks support to focus on the development of a Satellite Rearing (SR) facility at the EN site in Packwood while retaining the option to utilize the Tower Rock site as a contingency.

Discussion:

- Josua asked about including information on the intent of kelt reconditioning including whether they would be released upstream or downstream. Eric responded they aren't even sure kelts can be raised at this location given the water temperature and therefore he recommended to leave such specifics out of the Decision Document. As we learn more, we can continue these discussions.
- Anne noted she has not yet been contacted by EN. She also asked if Tacoma could nail down the dates and describe the program itself – not just the facility. She expressed concerns about the impacts on water quality which would change depending on the time of year. Eric responded he was intending for this Decision Document to support the decision to proceed with the development of the site and leave program specifics out of it to maintain flexibility for program variations, depending on when and how we use it. Further discussions will occur at the regulatory meetings.
- The schedule is largely unchanged. It shows the FTC recommendation in June and procuring material and starting construction this October and concluding in October of 2024.
- Anne asked about next steps if all of a sudden it is determined that this site is a no-go. Should the need to pursue a different option be included in the timeline? Eric noted that should the EN site be unavailable for any reason, Tacoma would engage the FTC to concur on next steps. Additionally, conversations about the other two sites will continue while the EN site is confirmed and developed. WDFW has also suggested some alternate paths for Satellite Rearing, including net pens, potential chum programs, etc.

Action Items:

- Eric: By later today (May 2) email out an edited version of the DD for all to review prior to the June FTC meeting. Set up a joint meeting with EN and Anne to discuss the project in detail.
- All: Review and try to get comments to Eric and copy Travis by May 19 if possible.

**Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery Fund / Habitat and Production (HAP) Subgroup
Presenter: Melora Shelton**

Melora reported there were no major updates since the April meeting. There are applications for two projects seeking CRR funding. Both are from Cascade Forest Conservancy:

- Hall Creek Restoration
- Upper Cispus Tributary Restoration- Woods and Crystal

She then reviewed the agenda for the May 4 LCFRB Project Presentation hybrid meeting. This meeting is open to the public. Updated Teams links were emailed on April 27. Questions from FTC members during this meeting will be incorporated by LCFRB into formal feedback to which applicants will be asked to respond.

All CRR Project information is housed on a Google Drive, including new information on project benefits to fish. Links were emailed on April 17. The FTC will reengage with this process starting in August when we hear back from LCFRB on the final proposals for funding. A DD to approve funding will follow. Note: Just after this meeting concluded, Melora emailed the budget breakdown for the CRR ask and the total project amount.

Public Comment Period #1 - Agenda related

Larry:

- Are there goals for the satellite facility(ies)? I always ask about adult return goals- how many adults returning are you shooting for?
- What's an official route to request a response from the public to Tacoma Power? Over the past several FTC meetings, I have addressed and requested information re coho NOR retention as for several years now the returns have been strong enough. On April 4, I addressed and asked again, Bryce did make comments as to their position. I reiterated that according to the FERC Tacoma Power Settlement Agreement, this looks like a Tacoma Power financial responsibility. What is the official route to request this? Travis and Matt? Through an online comment to FERC? To the Tacoma Power Board? As you should know this is an ongoing concern of mine and others that should be addressed. My concern also gets to other core responsibilities.
- Travis: WDFW offers opportunities for the public to recommend regulation changes. There is also the North of Falcon process.
- Josua: The budget from the recently concluded legislative session was just announced. WDFW had sought long-term funding but received only a two-year allotment. They are just now looking to prioritize how to work on the Fisheries Management Evaluation Plan (FMEP) for the Lower Columbia. Seasons are set in North of Falcon process and WDFW must operate under ESA rules.
- Jonathan: Shared NW Sportsman Magazine link to article that noted "The other great Columbia news is that WDFW was budgeted just under \$1.4 million to hire more staffers to complete or update a number of fisheries management and evaluation plans, or FMEPs, that otherwise could be the subject of lawsuits and potential shutdowns – and not just salmon and steelhead fisheries, but trout, walleye, bass, you name it in the basin's anadromous zone."

Topics for June 6, 2023 FTC

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities
- Gravel Augmentation Plan Draft DD
- LCPUD Cowlitz Falls Dam Operations
- Update on Cispus Release Site
- Satellite Rearing DD
- Downstream Adaptive Management TWG
- Significance of Performance Metric
- CRR Fund
- M&E Subgroup

- 2023 APR Process
 - Preview August FTC Meeting topics
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Meeting Evaluation

- Technology worked great
 - Finalized 2023 Protocols and Work Plan
 - *Good participation and information sharing today.*
 - Josua's quote: Time to go fishing. Josua adapted this quote to make it more inclusive: "Teach everyone to fish, but first teach everyone to be fair. Take less, give more. Give more of yourself, take less from the world. Nobody owes you anything, you owe the world everything." Suzy Kassem
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Closing Remarks

Travis thanked everyone for attending this meeting helping to make sure we are implementing our license properly. He appreciates everyone's technical expertise. He also encouraged everyone to take good care of themselves. He disclosed that he missed the April meeting due to an emergency appendectomy. He also said he will see that the next in-person meeting has a hybrid option.

Parking Lot

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