

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final Public Meeting Summary
June 1, 2021, from 9:30 – 3:30

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
Leah Marquez-Glynn	TPU
Steve West	LCFRB
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Debbie Carlson	BPA
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

Attending Members of the Public:

Larry Prior, Jack Tipping, Stan Bartle, Greg King

Remaining 2021 FTC Meeting Dates: Aug. 3 (no July meeting), Sept. 7, Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Dec. 7

Approval of Last Meeting Summary

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

Updates

Water Quality/Monitoring: Carol noted that while the Water Quality Protection Plan (WQPP) has been approved for the Blue Creek dredging, there will be continual adjustments to BMPs to prevent/ minimize turbid discharges depending on the amount of water in the creek at the time of the dredging. The WQPP for the Barrier Dam project along with the Construction Stormwater General Permit was issued, and is now being transferred to the contractor, who is on site and prepping for in-water work starting on July 1.

The Mayfield debris removal is proceeding today. Carol apologized that she has not yet had the time to approve the WQPP for that project. Eric confirmed they plan to burn the debris on the shoreline. Carol noted that practice may require additional BMPs because the WQPP is not yet approved and adding charcoal to waters of the state violates water quality standards. Travis offered to follow up as needed.

Kosmos update: Carol showed a photo of Rainy Creek which flows into Riffe Lake. When it rains, toxins from the hydrocarbon-contaminated sediment (along a small portion of the top edge of the slope) discharges into the water. While this is an ongoing concern of Ecology, Carol expressed appreciation that TPU has been very responsive to meeting water quality requirements.

Fish Facilities

Barrier Dam Project: Eric reported that they just started the process of setting up to make repairs to the Barrier Dam. He showed an aerial view of the restricted areas for the project. Parking will also be restricted, but there will be fishing access on the bank at the 400' line. Carol reiterated her previous request that fishermen be kept as far from construction as possible so as not to interfere with turbidity monitoring. Ecology requires continuous monitoring within 300' downstream of the farthest in-water work. Bryce noted anglers would only be allowed to fish below the 400' WDFW boundary, which they see as adequate. Travis will follow up on the adequacy of the signage to keep people away from the monitoring location. Bryce reported WDFW's hooking mortality study has been completed. He also reminded folks that the fishing boundary is not the same as a public access boundary. There will be water quality monitoring any time work is being done in the river. The contractor has installed temporary docks on both sides of the river for access. The contractor is also finishing improvements to the access road and lay down area. Tacoma will lead fish salvage efforts in cooperation with the contractor. The widening of the access road was done to accommodate the crane.

Cowlitz Separator: WDFW finished up the spawning for winter steelhead and goals were met. For spring Chinook, they are currently a week past the peak of the run and are currently short on males and females with an excess of jacks. They have been retaining all the jacks in case any of them, as they mature, are identified as females. Tacoma will be looking for guidance from the M&E Subgroup on whether to put surplus HOR jacks in addition to NORs upstream. Summer steelhead have just started to come in. They have already collected a few for recycling which starts June 4 for the first group. Brood collection begins in July.

Mayfield Update: Steelhead outmigrant numbers are declining commensurate with an increase in coho. The crew is dorsal tagging all steelhead and cutthroat. They had ~4,800 smolts the week of May 24-28. There were no fry or parr.

Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility: Chris reported they wrapped up the month of May collecting approximately 98% of this season's smolts to date during the last month. 16K smolts came through the last weekend alone. The staff worked hard all weekend to keep up and transferred the smolts to the stress relief ponds.

Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group: Matt reported that Tacoma received comments on how they measured Fish Capture Efficiency (FCE) in last year's report. The TWG has been working on how best to calculate FCE. The current report will still use the calculation Tacoma has used historically, and they plan to use the new calculation, as suggested by DFW in the future. Steelhead FCE is currently at 72% for the June 01, 2021 FTC Meeting

year so far, while coho is at 73%. These percentages have been pretty steady, along with flows. No spill events so far, though this may change this week due to snow melt runoff. One of the testing scenarios was to increase tailrace flow to see if the CFFF could collect more fish at 750 cfs. The current flow situation will provide an opportunity to test this. They will be monitoring fish health continuously (using NOAA standards) as they will be testing above screening criteria. Laura asked if they have baseline data on fish health for comparison purposes.

At the last TWG meeting they discussed reviewing the draft Adaptive Management Plan to see if updates are needed. This should result in a roadmap of what the TWG should focus on. Matt will send out the notes from the last TWG meeting within a week.

2021 CRR Program Update: Travis reported conversations continue with LCFRB on standing up the habitat portion of the program this year. The LCFRB will administer the habitat grant round and present a prioritized list of projects to the FTC for decision. Projects that are selected will be administered by the LCFRB with Tacoma providing the funding.

The hatchery portion will be administered and funded by Tacoma. Evaluation of potential projects will be performed by a subcommittee with production expertise. This will be done in a manner consistent with the license with the goal of recovery and wanting to increase adult return numbers. The subcommittee will likely include members of FTC. Peggy asked about when it would be appropriate to update the CRR Fund Implementation Strategy document (developed and approved by the FTC in 2017). Travis responded that this will be addressed by Tacoma which should be up and running in the next few months. Steve M reported the LCFRB Board gave a thumbs-up to this collaboration with Tacoma at their May 7 meeting. The LCFB and Tacoma are currently meeting on this weekly.

M&E Subgroup Report: Phil reported the M&E Subgroup didn't meet in May as they used the time to conduct the APR Science meeting which went very well. A draft annual report should be delivered to TPU by June 30, and available for FTC review after that. John Serl set up three working meetings to ensure report completion. Phil expressed appreciation for all the great teamwork and organizational skills that resulted in a successful APR meeting.

Satellite Rearing: Matt reported that he has developed a draft work plan that is being reviewed internally. He structured the workplan on Tacoma's response to the Jamie Herrera-Beutler letter. He looks forward to FTC feedback on this to ensure the timeline is realistic and that it adequately addresses public comment. 3 phases.

1. Analyzing hatchery vs satellite rearing options (pros and cons of each)
2. Soliciting public feedback.
3. Developing schedule for engineering, construction, design, etc.

Matt estimates it will take a year to get through all the phases. The FTC can expect to see the draft workplan in the next few days.

APR Highlights: Matt reported that Phil and all the presenters did a great job at the first APR meeting on May 19. The research that was shared was excellent and received rave reviews. Most of the presenters took the perspective of talking about 2020 results along with the 5-year outlook. John Serl and Thomas Buehrens went back further in their presentations. All did a great job bringing information together for the APR. They are in the process of shoring up the data (numbers by brood year or release year) in the presentations before posting

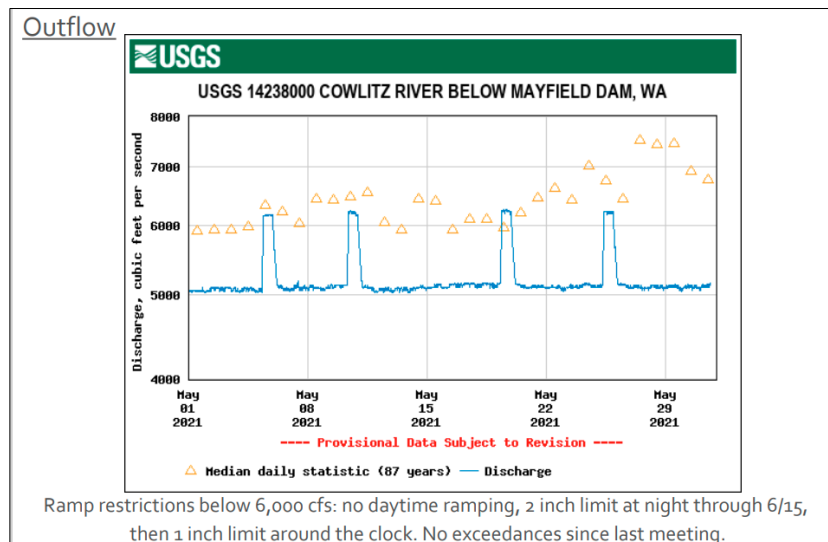
them to the website. He reminded all that the goal of the APR is to be able to point back to a single date source to create consistency in language and format to facilitate FTC review.

Hydro Operations Update

Presenters: Melora Shelton and Leah Marquez-Glynn

Melora kicked off the presentation with the usual Hydro Ops presentation:

- Inflows: These were high in January, typical in February, and low in March and April. Precipitation in the last week of May brought inflows up from 78% to 88% of the historical average.
- Snowpack – Paradise is still holding at 131% of average. There has been considerable melt out at White Pass which is down to 60% of average.
- Storage: Riffe Lake is up 18.5' since our last meeting with the current elevation at 726'. Mayfield's operating band is at the summer minimum of 421'.
- Outflows are steady at just above 5K cfs plus fish transport pulse flows. There were no minimum flow exceedances in May. Ramp restrictions were below 6K cfs.
- 10-Day Forecast: Little precipitation is anticipated. Freezing levels will be at 10K' through Thursday and then drop to 5K' over the weekend.



Link to the USGS real-time Cowlitz River hydrograph:

https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site_no=14238000&PARAMeter_cd=00060.00065

Proposal for June minimum flow reduction to support refill at Riffe Lake: Leah (the resource Operations Lead at Tacoma Power) briefly reviewed the snowpack situation and reported there was an 85% chance of refill in early March (based on River Forecast Center data). The April 19 model still showed 85% chance of refill, even with diminishing snowpack. Despite the low precipitation in March and April, the April 19th model indicated there were still decent refill projections into the first week of May. She noted the entire PNW region is currently experiencing various levels of drought. While Inflows have been elevated due to snowmelt, they are still below normal. May 17 had only a 35% chance of refill if continuing the 5K cfs discharge. The bottom 75% of the scenarios modeled didn't even come close to refill.

Leah explained Tacoma wants to protect against the lowest inflow scenario to provide as much recreation opportunity as possible, while also meeting the summer power demand.

The swim beach is barely usable at 730'. Carol expressed concern that reducing flows may risk inundating the Kosmos site. Leah responded she is confident elevation levels wouldn't come close to 755' elevation at Kosmos. (The contaminated ledge is at 758'.) Construction at Barrier Dam will have limited discharge out of Mayfield – down to ~2500 cfs. There is a need to enter that period being able to manage those flows without picking up discharge.

Leah noted that even with the 3" of precipitation the last half of May, the total precipitation for May is still a record low. The snowpack is continuing to melt. There is currently an 8% likelihood of refill. Leah recommends reducing minimum flows in the Cowlitz to 3,500 cfs plus fish transport pulses in June. The lowest elevation scenario extends only to 742'. Dry weather is predicted for June and July.

The DD sent out on May 18 described consulting with the FTC to change minimum flows to 3,500 cfs plus fish transport flows. While there are mostly juvenile fish this time of year, it is also important to protect flows for adult Chinook in the fall as they return to spawn.

Consensus Decision: After much discussion, there was consensus among the attending FTC representatives to, starting June 4, initiate a more natural, and gradual reduction in flows (a daily reduction of 100-125 cfs) than what Tacoma had originally proposed in order to reach 2,500 cfs by July 1. Fish transport flows will continue unaltered. Travis will follow up with USFWS and Yakama Nation reps so this decision can be considered final on June 3.

It was noted this will provide an opportunity to monitor for stranding and compare prior results to results with this more gradual method. Bryce suggested some kind of buffering earlier in the year would be helpful as it would reduce the risk of these things continuing to happen with such frequency. Fish forecasting and hydro needs are difficult to predict. Leah agreed and noted she has been more conservative in her management approach as she balances business and ecological needs.

Action Items:

- Leah: Do additional modeling as per the direction suggested by WDFW and revise the DD accordingly.
- Travis: Contact the FTC representatives from the Yakama Nation and USFWS to describe the proposed action and gauge their support.
- Travis: On June 3 send the revised DD reflecting changes to down ramp gradually over the month of June from 5,000 cfs to 2,500 cfs.
- All: Review the revised DD and let Travis know of any questions or concerns by end of day on June 3. Barring any objections, the flow reduction will begin on June 4.
- Melora: Coordinate with Monika Sundbaum to make sure river users are informed of this action.
- Phil: Put this topic on the M&E Subgroup agenda so they can review the revised model and suggest protocol for monitoring for fry stranding.
- Melora: In accordance with Peggy's suggestion, add to the August Hydro Ops presentation a slide that shows actual ramping as showing cfs only doesn't give us the stage information (instead of just the discharge).
- Melora: Send out Hydro Status Update in first week of July including update from Leah on where we ended up relative to target elevation.
- Melora: Send out corrected PPT presentation.

Gravel Augmentation

Presenters: Travis Nelson

Travis explained that he and Melora are extending the comment period on long-term plan and crosswalk until mid-July. Still planning to place material on Barrier Island this fall as part of the Barrier Dam Construction process. Still working on an alternate downstream location. Talks re access to the Jorgensen property are continuing.

Action Item:

- All: Please send any comments to Travis and Melora on the outline by July 16.
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FHMP: Transition Plans

Presenter: Bryce Glaser and Phil Sandstrom (for Matt Bleich)

Bryce reported the last workshop was May 26. They made good progress. Mostly focused on SP Chinook transition planning – how to start some of the bio-programming exercises. Using the SAR analysis as a guide. There have been some good discussions re: transport strategy for those fish. Considering when to transition to an integrated program. Have not quite finished the steelhead piece, but more good discussions – especially about transitioning the winter programs. They have calendared another meeting a few weeks out. Have some offline work to do. Coho is up next – looking at key questions to address. Still on track – looking to circulate drafts to FTC and the public later this summer. The next workshop will be June 16.

Potential Topics for August 3 FTC Meeting

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality
 - Fish Facilities incl. Barrier Dam Project overview
 - Satellite Rearing Update
 - Downstream Adaptive Mgt. TWG
 - FHMP Transition Plan
 - Timeline to get info out to the public
 - Satellite Rearing Program
 - APR Meeting
 - CRR Program - Stand up HAP by year end?
 - M&E Subgroup
 - Gravel Augmentation
 - Preview September 7 (day after Labor Day) FTC Meeting topics
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Members of the Cowlitz Fishing Community Remembered

Travis noted that two passionate anglers, and former Cowlitz River Advisory Group members have recently passed away. Bob Reid passed away four weeks ago, and Don Glaser six weeks ago. Larry noted both were among the founding members of the Friends of the Cowlitz. Both were also guides on the Cowlitz and cared deeply about fish recovery and spent lots of time at meetings trying to get fish collection at Cowlitz Falls. They gave their passion, time, and effort, and much of their lives toward restoring the Cowlitz fishery.

Donny received WDFW's Volunteer of the Year award. He and his wife Karen owned Barrier Dam Campground tackle shop for 32 years (until 2020). He was a very dedicated angler with colorful language and enjoyed helping people fish in the Cowlitz River and Mayfield Lake.

Bob was passionate fisherman and also a real data guy. He attended many of these meetings. He was very dedicated to the Cowlitz. While he wasn't known for a polished demeanor, he was very clear about his message and had the data to back him up.

Due to their efforts, we now have a recycling program on the summer runs. Bob was relentless in pursuing and gaining access to the Wallace property.

Stan closed by expressing appreciation for the improved communication with the FTC. This was something that Don and Bob had hoped to see.

Public Comment Session (*FTC responses appear in italics.*)

Larry Prior:

Chris Vandenberg wanted to bring up the question of why FTC meetings are not subject to open public meetings act.

Travis: When we get out of the pandemic, we will revisit this. It is mostly a capacity issue (physical space limitations). We have moved to opening these up to the public on a quarterly basis. Tacoma is looking at doing this more often in the best way possible. Bryce notes WDFW is also open to opening up FTC meetings to the public – in whatever manner.

In the current list of FTC members, representation from fishing community is missing.

If there were no dams here flows in August and September would be ~700cfs. Dams allow us to preserve water for fisheries where there wouldn't be water otherwise. Larry hears a lot about planning and goals (pHOS, etc.). He is interested in adult return goals. A few years ago, Don and Larry put some adult return goals together – Larry included NOR goals. The production-only mentality has been to the detriment of our fishing. He wants also to see accountability for when adult return goals aren't met. He noted having such goals can really increase creativity among fisheries staff.

DFW Escapement reports: Priest Rapids Hatchery produced fall Chinook with 40K returning. Why can't the Cowlitz do this as well?

Jamie Herrera-Beutler's letter echoes a lot of the fishing community's frustrations.

Bryce: Some of these issues are tied to the APR process and may be revisited during that part of today's discussion. His understanding is the 2011 FHMP shifted from using adult return targets to evaluating juvenile production targets. We are now trying to build some adult targets back in through the transition plan process, such as adult seeding capacity targets and WDFW is also looking to use SARs to predict a range of adult return goals from hatchery programs throughout lower Columbia programs. Setting adult return targets with the accountability piece has sometimes been met with reluctance due to factors outside of our control that impact adult returns. Agree that we need to do a better job describing what we can expect to see from hatchery production.

Tacoma needs to do a better job of getting the word out about these meetings. There is a need to do a better job of building participation from the community.

Travis: Agreed and will improve the notification process for the next meeting.

Jack Tipping:

The Tilton River Fall Chinook Program listed in the FHMP does not look like it will work. The Plan indicates wanting to get 3K NORs up there. We are seeing 20K smolts in the Mayfield trap. Also, it makes sense to assume a similar life history for fall Chinook in the Tilton, as in June 01, 2021 FTC Meeting

the lower river. He hates to see the program go forward without anglers on the lower river having the opportunity to harvest fall Chinook.

Bryce: There is an opportunity to engage on this through the Transition Plan review process. The Fall Chinook Plan is close to being released for public review. There is a broodstock collection component that includes a marking strategy that will allow for evaluation of fall Chinook population origin for returns to the Separator. The assessment of carrying capacity of the Upper Watershed/Tilton will be helpful as will better escapement estimate methodology for the lower river. This is all information that will be needed for us to implement harvest of natural origin fish with NOAA under the ESA. The intent is finding the best strategy that includes the harvest of NORs after sufficient abundance has been established.

What can we do to expedite getting NOR fish escapement numbers? How can the public help?

Bryce: The transition plans discuss doing some life cycle modeling to establish biological targets for seeding capacity for fall Chinook. This is a high priority. Some of that work has already been done and there are coarse level estimates of carrying capacity completed for Tilton fall Chinook. Travis agreed noting this is a work in progress. Phil explained they are working toward life cycle models for coho and fall Chinook.

Steelhead: In coastal strategies, Bryce's understanding is that many places do have adult escapement targets they work on achieving annually with co-managers. In the lower Columbia tributaries, we are more driven by impact rates than escapement targets.

Meeting Evaluation

- Appreciated the attendance and appreciation of Larry, Jack, and Stan.
- Wish we had more members of the public – need to do a better job advertising these meetings.
- Appreciate Leah's presentation and discussion.
- MS Teams seemed to be acting up today.
- Investigate adding the ability to call into the Teams meeting on August 3. Chris Vandenberg and Ann Weckback would have appreciated being able to phone into this meeting.
- Look at setting up the Teams site so it is accessible to all and available (document access and retrieval, etc.)
- Great discussion on summer flows and how to hold water, save water, and still have water for recreation and fish.
- Josua's quote: "A good collaboration pushes the boundaries of both partners." -- Neil Blumenthal.

Annual Program Review (APR) – Day 2

Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt reminded all that May 19 was first APR meeting for the year. At that meeting, he shared a table of the various populations in the Cowlitz along with recommended considerations listed in the FHMP, the recommendation for 2021 and supporting rationale.

There were few changes in recommended actions since 2017. He noted it makes sense to stay the course given the current focus on transition planning.

APR Thoughts Today – From 2020 FHMP			
Population	Recommended Considerations from FHMP	Recommendation	Reason for Recommendation
Fall Chinook	Increase max transport to Tilton above 1,600	Do not proceed in 2021	Control hatchery influence on NORs
Fall Chinook	Evaluate Current Net Pen Strategy in Mayfield	Bioprogram and evaluate benefit of shift to Coho	Potential benefits to capacity and fish health
Spring Chinook, Coho, Winter Steelhead	Modify Adult Hatchery Release Strategy upstream from Cowlitz Falls	Spring Chinook and Coho – 25% Cispus; 25% Upper Cowlitz; 50% Scanewa Winter Steelhead – 50% Cispus; 50% Upper Cowlitz	Distribution across tributaries for opportunity and seeding. Lake plant for opportunity and self sorting
Coho	Increase max HORs transported above 25K	Proceed up to 40K	Increased opportunity and abundance building
Coho	Increase max HORs to Tilton above 6K	Proceed up to 12K	Increased opportunity and abundance building
Winter Steelhead	Consider moving to a segregated program in Lower Cowlitz Subbasin	Being addressed in Transition Plan to also include early run timing.	Increased opportunity
Winter Steelhead	pHOS management strategy at Blue Creek including harvest management or barriers	Continue to provide harvest opportunity; split Blue Creek from pHOS calc.	Blue Creek pHOS drives increases in estimates of hatchery influence
Summer Steelhead	Consider increased recycling in Lower Cowlitz	Up to 6,600 and earlier in 2021	Increased opportunity

This is the second APR meeting, where the plan will be adjusted based on feedback / comments received at the initial meeting. Matt summarized those comments as follows:

Fall Chinook: Recommendation to bioprogram and evaluate benefit of shift to coho: Received the suggestion to be sure to get feedback from industry leaders if deciding to go this route, so you do it right. This would involve implementing a marking shift.

The Winter Steelhead Transition Plan will be out in 2021.

Summer Steelhead: Consider doubling the recycling and extending the length of the program. The ESA constraint for pHOS shows an end date of August 31. For 2021 can we extend the back end of season by two weeks to end of August? Phil volunteered to give Rich the numbers of summer steelhead through end of August to assist with NOAA’s decision to support the extension to the end of August. WDFW noted that when running the weirs through the summer, they rarely saw any fish move into the weirs. This is due to the low water levels in the tributaries that time of year. A key influencer is when the first big rain happens (usually September). With NOAA’s concurrence, there was agreement to proceed. At the third and final APR meeting on June 23, Matt will let folks know we will extend the recycling window (if we have excess fish) by two weeks.

Parking Lot

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