

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final Conference Call/GoToMeeting Summary
June 2, 2020 from 9:30 – 3:30

FTC Representative Attendees:

Travis Nelson	TPU
Bryce Glaser	WDFW
Carol Serdar	WA Dept. of Ecology
Paul Sparks	WA Council of TU, TU, American Rivers

Additional Attendees:

Rich Turner	NMFS
James Archibald	NMFS
Scott Anderson	NMFS
Jim Pacheco	Ecology
John Serl	WDFW
Peggy Miller	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Sam Gibbons	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Matt Bleich	TPU
Florian Leischner	TPU
Melora Shelton	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Phil Sandstrom	TPU
Tim Hoffnagle	TPU
Chris Foster	TPU
Bill Sharp	Yakama Nation
Diane Hopster	USDA FS
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Steve West	LCFRB
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

Remaining 2020 FTC Meeting Dates: July 7 (placeholder), Aug. 4 (conference call/GoToMeeting), Sept. 1 (placeholder), Oct. 6, Nov. 3 (placeholder), Dec. 1 (public meeting?)

Action Item: Travis – Update upcoming meeting invites to show that they are conference calls (to minimize the spread of COVID-19).

Announcement

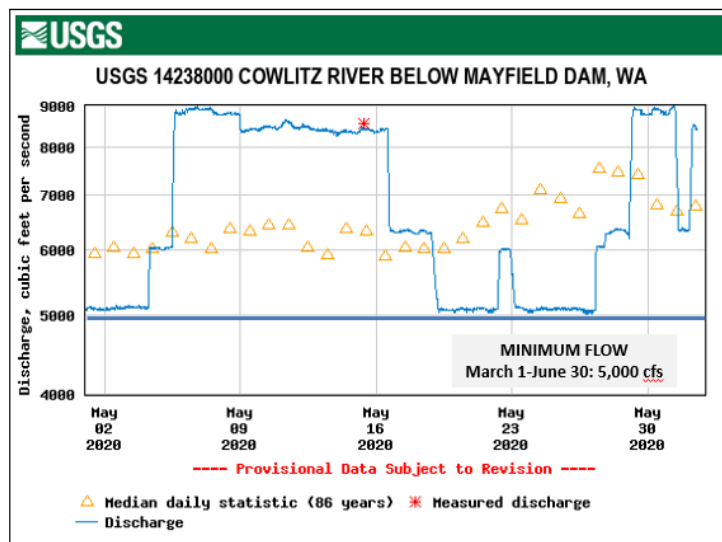
- Florian announced this is his last FTC meeting. After 26 years in the US, he will return to Germany and enroll in an International Water Management Program based in Holland. We appreciate his work with the FTC over the years and wish him all the best. His last day with TPU will be July 31st.

Updates

Hydro Operations:

- Inflows: Florian reported that inflow to Riffe Lake in March and April was well below the historical average of 7,027 cfs. Rain and snow melt helped bring the May inflow to within 10 cfs of the historical average of 9,135 cfs.
- Reservoir elevations: Riffe is now full, at 749', with potential to spill. Florian noted that while there is potential to spill at Mayfield also, it is less likely than Riffe, as Mayfield has an additional 5K cfs of generating capacity compared to Mossy Rock. Carol requested that Mayfield elevations be added to the Hydro Ops presentations.
- Snowpack: The snowpack at Paradise is in good shape and often lasts until September. The White Pass snow has melted. Florian noted June will be interesting as it is the month most affected by climate change. Forecast is dry and warm with freezing levels of 4-8K ft. and inflows between 6K and 8K cfs.
- Outflows: These are projected to be 5-9K cfs, depending on inflows.

Outflow



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: Carol reported that an amendment that is being developed for the Barrier Dam boat launch WQPP. She has been coordinating with Matt Peter on this and thanked Eric for the map he sent to include in the amendment. Blue Creek will need a WQPP to do some dredging. An HPA will be out for review. A WQPP for LWD is being developed for the whole Cowlitz. Carol expects to receive this the week of June 8. She also looks forward to next week receiving the Kosmos data summary report from contractor HartCrowser. Carol also added a WQPP is being designed for the dredging of Blue Creek adjacent to the Trout Hatchery.

Eric added that TPU will skip the intake dredging this year as it is not necessary. TPU will assess the situation next year and perhaps conduct the dredging every other year.

Matt noted the Barrier Dam repair project is in the early planning stages and that a communications plan will be out in the near future.

Action Item: Travis – Determine how best to share Mayfield reservoir elevation data with the FTC.

Downstream Adaptive Management TWG: Matt reported that four of the five directed evaluations planned for this year will be performed. The study that involved acoustically tagged Chinook won't be performed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Steelhead study to evaluate how modifying the floor geometry of the collector might impact CE is ongoing. They are using PIT tags to evaluate fish movement. The higher flows last weekend provided for an opportunistic spill of 750 cfs through the collector. Unfortunately, they had to back off from 750 cfs due to the floor setting. TPU is conducting an engineering review of the event.

Weekly FCEs look similar to the past two years with Coho (50% early in the season). FCEs for later groups in May range from 70-90% for Coho and Steelhead. This is great news! The CF Northshore collector seems to have brought in longer duration of a good collection. Matt estimates the overall collection rate will be 80-90%. Josua asked if they are seeing an improvement in kelt capture efficiency. Matt responded that while no mark-recapture is being done for kelts, it is worth exploring. Paul said he would like to see a weekly tally of what is happening with these numbers (similar to what is provided in Gabe's report).

Action Item: Matt – Send out Summary Template from last TWG meeting.

Fisheries Essential Operations: Eric reported that the hatchery operations are slowly returning to normal. Mayfield will continue with reduced staffing through July, due to low adult returns. He reported they continue to see depleted Spring Chinook adult returns. The run is estimated to be 50% complete. They should have 755 in broodstock at this time of year but only have 79 on hand. They have seen approximately the same amount of NOR as HOR adults return. Avian hazing protocols have remained at all daylight hours although some staffing challenges associated with COVID 19 caused some deviations this past season.

Cowlitz Spring Chinook: Bryce and Sam expressed concern that return numbers for Spring Chinook are so critically low they anticipate a broodstock shortage for this year's program. The reason for the low returns is unclear. Release numbers were strong and there haven't been any disease issues. Some kind of challenge is occurring post release. They hope to understand this better in the future. In the meantime, WDFW has had some preliminary discussions with TPU and NMFS about how to address this. The Lewis and especially the Kalama are seeing decent returns. WDFW is considering bringing surplus Kalama eggs to the Cowlitz as a backfill for harvest augmentation. These would be marked so they could be sorted when they return as adults and not used as subsequent broodstock. It is not ideal to bring in out-of-basin stock, but if they do nothing, there could be a long-term impact in production and harvest opportunity in the future. Tim suggested that WDFW stop transporting NOR spring Chinook upstream and use them for broodstock. Paul brought up the issue of timing and also suggested running a remote site incubator.

A decision needs to be made in the next two weeks. Travis reminded all that WDFW has prescriptive management authority with respect to this decision. Bryce will facilitate additional offline discussions to come up with the best approach. He reminded all that we are working toward a dual mandate – working toward recovery and also providing harvest opportunity. We are in a reintroduction / recolonization phase using a hatchery program to move the program forward. The Kalama is the most similar stock to the Cowlitz. If the Cowlitz population collapses, we would likely turn to the Kalama stock to rebuild. Bryce summarized the two most pressing issues to address as:

1. What to do with NORs that are returning?

2. If we want to utilize Kalama fish, need to figure out the logistics (space issues at Kalama).

Next steps: Sam, Brian, and Eric will discuss this issue further and put together options and timelines, including logistical challenges. This information will form the basis of further discussion ending in a recommendation to proceed. In addition to WDFW, this discussion will include interested parties: Paul Sparks, Bill Sharp, Phil Sandstrom, Tim Hoffnagle and from NMFS: James Archibald, Scott Anderson, and Rich Turner.

Steelhead Release from the Hatchery: Phil reported numbers from the conductance counter and PIT tag system were in close agreement (within .2% of each other). 91.4% of PIT tags were detected compared to abundance of 98%. Overall survival was 92%. Winter run was slightly higher than summer run. All in all, these are very good results.

CRR Fund: Florian reported they finished up the hydro model with one of their contractors and the report is now available. They had hoped to present it at the annual science conference which has now been postponed due to the pandemic. The LCFRB concluded the Upper Cowlitz Habitat Strategy. Both documents will help inform the development of habitat projects in the upper basin. TPU has met with LCFRB over the past few months and they have agreed to take separate paths for the next funding round. Habitat projects will be reviewed internally with the FTC, of which the LCFRB is a technical representative. Paths can be aligned again in the future. TPU has decided to slow things down a bit on this process as they seek guidance from the FHMP, especially on the hatchery side. After cleaning up the first round, based on feedback received, they ran into some guidance issues as they look toward preparing for the second round. With Florian leaving, they are considering how best to free up additional resources at TPU for this program which is now down to a staff of one. Peggy suggested this was a good opportunity to reestablish the subcommittee to help move the program forward.

FTC Protocols | FTC Meeting Frequency

Presenter: Travis Nelson

Protocols: Travis reminded all the protocols are intended to be reviewed annually. We all agreed that in doing the review, it would be good to have a concise protocol document that would get everyone on the same page and provide clear transparent guidance to new and existing members about how the FTC functions. Some feel it should be a standalone document while others prefer it point to SA language without restating it. There is unclear language in the SA relative to non-signatory participation and whether they can have technical representatives.

Action Item: All – By June 15, email Travis with your interest to help resolve this offline.

M&E Subgroup

Presenter: Phil Sandstrom

Phil reported that in the last M&E meeting, they covered topics including Spring Chinook SAR, use of the AHA/ISIT Model, Trout releases, and the Cowlitz Winter-Run Steelhead baseline. They also discussed Rich Turner's interest in Steelhead kelts at Cowlitz Falls, noting which data are available and which would need to be gathered. They also reviewed their Work Plan (shared at the May FTC Meeting) and idea of using it to guide the M&E Group, keeping the FTC appropriately informed while seeking FTC input on a regular basis.

This subgroup sees itself as an employee of the FTC. Overall, little progress is being made due to the necessary focus on FHMP, budget issues, etc. Phil will send out his notes from the last meeting along with the subcommittee reporting template, which he has found to be inadequate when it comes to tracking details.

FHMP Update | Satellite Rearing
Presenter: Matt Bleich

FHMP: Matt, referring to the schedule below, noted TPU is, as of yesterday, wrapping up the review and incorporating comments.

Action Item	Date	Responsible Party
Review Annual Process Chapter	11/7/19 – 12/7/19	FTC
Group Comment Discussion - APR	12/3/19 – 1/31/20	All
Review Complete Draft Document	11/18/19 – 5/30/20	FTC
Unresolved Topics Workshops	2/15/20-3/15/20	All
Edit Complete Draft Document	6/1/20 – 7/31/20	Tacoma/FTC
Unresolved Interim Plan Document	4/1/20-6/30/20	All
Review Draft Final Complete FHMP	8/7/20 – 9/7/20	Public
Incorporate Comments and Finalize FHMP	9/7/20 – 10/7/20	Tacoma
File updated FHMP	10/18/20	Tacoma

The deliverables from the unresolved topic workshops have been incorporated to the extent possible. A white paper on the interim plan for Fall Chinook is currently being reviewed by the FTC, with comments due by June 8. This paper will be put in an appendix to the FHMP. While solutions have been developed for other unresolved topics, a couple of them are still in progress. Matt expressed appreciation for WDFW input with which the LCFRB is largely aligned. There are still a couple of chapters where WDFW is providing comments. TPU is allowing another week for additional comments on the M&E and Adaptive Management chapters provided late, and still under WDFW review. He also noted the technical editor is still working on some of the unresolved topics/products which will also need to be reviewed.

The three unresolved topics that remain are:

- How to describe data gaps - TPU is working through the comments on the entire draft and will be working with the technical editor to develop recommendations for this in the next two weeks, for FTC review.
- Adding language around the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Plan and its role in the basin – TPU will provide recommended text for this in the next two weeks.
- Conservation Sustainable Fishery Plan piece – TPU is checking to see if there is misalignment with what is listed in the FHMP.
- Chapter 10: Gamete transfer section - Characterization of the use of gametes and fish inside vs. outside of the basin. TPU doesn't want to remove these from the basin. WDFW has concerns outside of the basin. WDFW is providing alternate language on this for FTC to review.

Matt doesn't see a major need to get together physically to discuss these issues. Email seems to be sufficient. WDFW also offered to make time for a conference call to discuss – especially the M&E piece. By August 7, the FTC should be in strong alignment on the document as it is released for a 30-day review for comment. This review will be combined with the APR process so there are no surprises to the public.

Action Item: All – Make every effort to get any additional comments/edits to Matt by June 8.

Satellite Rearing Draft Report: Matt apologized for any lack of clarity regarding this report and emphasized that with this report, TPU is seeking FTC alignment with overarching goals and the programmatic perspective / criteria they will be using for the ponds. The intent was for R2 to summarize the initial discussion had by the FTC on this several months ago and develop the concepts from there. His hope is that by the end of this year, there will be agreement on what can be done for satellite rearing – what we want to do and where we want to do it. This would include how the ponds would fit roughly within the geography of the basin, as well as programmatically. From there, we would get to the specifics on the criteria, programmatic design, etc. TPU would then bring in contractors to begin the work. He suggests not linking this to the FHMP. There is a need to include satellite rearing into HGMPs appropriately. Bryce reviewed the last FHMP and the conceptual strategies laid out in that document for satellite rearing ponds. He would like to see the range of potential options and strategies fleshed out and included in the current version of the FHMP even if there isn't a final selection.

Action Item: All – By June 23, email comments on programmatic and geographical fit to Matt and Travis.

Gravel Augmentation

Presenter: Florian Leischner

Florian explained the 2020 Draft Gravel Augmentation Work Plan will be continually updated to ensure accountability for progress compared to the schedule. The latest version of the work plan includes some changes. TPU has been struggling with this project over the years. There were internal issues of real / perceived risk from an engineering standpoint. Florian had not been aware of the various concerns with finding a new location. The alternatives matrix is a good way to capture and address all the risks. They are not ready to share an updated version of the matrix as it is undergoing internal review, with input from TPU biologists, engineers, and leaders. TPU is close to drafting internal recommendations out for review. These may be in the form of a memo of decision document and will help finalize site selection and a path forward based on agreed goals for this project.

He further explained that they added the upper end of the trout hatchery as a potential location. Carol expressed disappointment with the slowness of this process and the perceived lack of progress over the last several months. She suggested putting money into engineered log jams. Florian will send out a package by the end of June for FTC review. Travis will be working with Melora and others on this going forward.

Action Item:

- Florian: By June 30, send out filled in Gravel Augmentation package including Alternatives Analysis spreadsheet and memo outlining recommendations with supporting rationale to all for discussion at the August FTC meeting.

Frequency of FTC Meetings

Presenter: Travis Nelson

At the May FTC meeting Travis announced that, due to COVID-19 and current budget shortfalls, TPU intends to alter the frequency of FTC meetings to every other month after the June meeting. The FTC typically takes July off anyway. Travis proposed that we, at the FTC

August meeting, reassess the issue of meeting frequency. Paul suggested reducing the number of topics in meetings vs. reducing the frequency. He further suggested considering even more meetings. Bryce explained that it is key to finalize the protocols around the subcommittees and how they will function. Changing the frequency to every other month, may provide an opportunity for subgroup meetings with clearly defined roles, including a report-out protocol to keep the FTC informed. Additionally, WDFW is concerned about the amount of work to be done to finalize the update of the FHMP and then to begin to implement it.

At the August 4 meeting, we should all have a clearer idea of what re-entry from COVID-19 will look like.

Approval of Last Meeting Summary

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

Meeting Evaluation

- Great attendance!
- Thanks all for putting up with various technological challenges.
- It would be helpful if all relevant documents were emailed out in advance of the meeting, even if they have been sent before.
- Best of luck to Florian as he returns to Germany (Holland) to study!
- Aim to finish the protocols at the August meeting. Put them first on the agenda.
- Wish there were a toll-free line.
- Some had trouble with GoToMeeting app, while others preferred it. Some will try out MS Teams for some subgroup meetings and report back.
- Appreciate ending with Josua's inspirational quotes.
- Quotable Quote: *"If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships - the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world at peace."* - Franklin D. Roosevelt

Potential Topics for August 4 FTC Meeting

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality
- FTC Protocols
- FTC Work Plan
- FHMP Update
- M&E Subgroup
- Gravel Augmentation Work Plan
- Downstream Adaptive Management TWG
- Cowlitz Restoration & Recovery Fund 2020
- Satellite Rearing
- Set topics for the next FTC Meeting

Parking Lot

- Presentation by TPU Power Management
- Review Steelhead Recycling Program