

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final Conference Call/GoToMeeting Summary
August 4, 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
Scott Anderson	NMFS
Jim Pacheco	Ecology
John Serl	WDFW
Peggy Miller	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Sam Gibbons	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Matt Bleich	TPU
Melora Shelton	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Phil Sandstrom	TPU
Tim Hoffnagle	TPU
Chris Foster	TPU
Bill Sharp	Yakama Nation
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Steve West	LCFRB
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

2020 FTC Meeting Dates: Sept. 1, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Dec. 1 (public meeting?)

FHMP/APR Meeting Date: Cowlitz River FHMP and Annual Project Review Virtual Meeting: Aug. 12 from 4-6pm. For agenda, meeting materials, meeting link and call-in number go to MyTPU.org/Cowlitz.

Approval of Last Meeting Summary

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

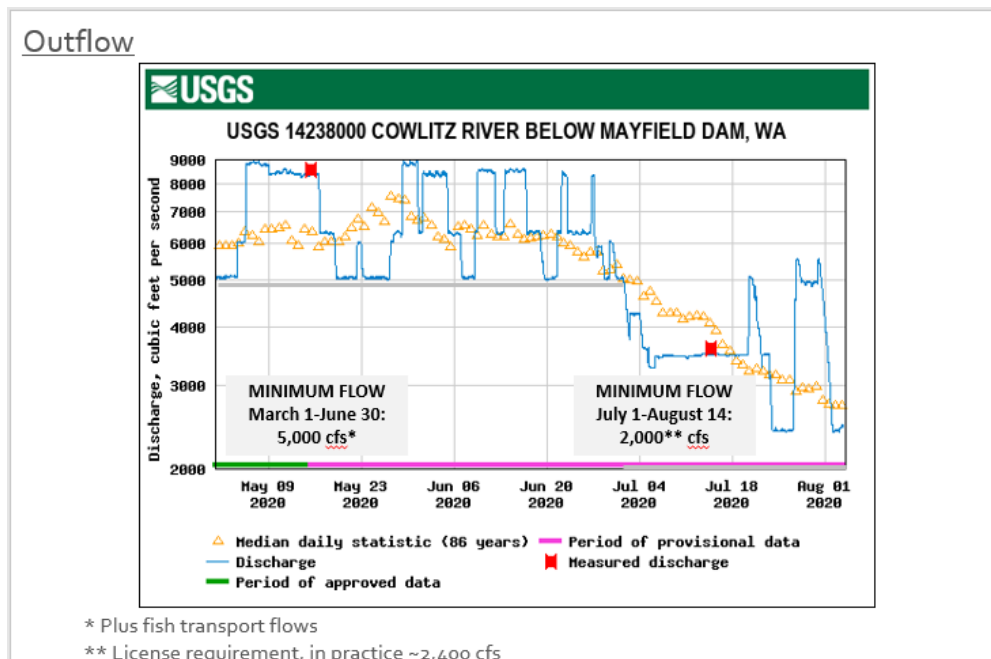
Announcements

- Diane Hopster (USFS) emailed Lyn letting her know that Kate Day will be taking her place on the FTC. She has been added to the distribution list. Welcome Kate!
- The Annual Project Review will occur virtually this year on August 12 from 4-6pm. See meeting link above.

Updates

Hydro Operations:

- Inflows: Melora reported that, with the exception of May, inflows have been low through the spring and early summer. For the last week, they have ranged from 2100-2400 cfs with a slightly downward trend.
- Storage at Riffe: Even with low inflows, Riffe Lake has refilled to above 748' and has drafted less than 4' since the last FTC meeting. Snowpack at Paradise depleted as of late July.
- Storage at Mayfield: This is dynamic due to Mossyrock generation and Tilton side flow. The typical range is 421-425' in summer. For reports in future FTC meetings, we will include the elevation from the day before as reported on the following link: <https://www.nwrft.noaa.gov/river/station/flowpolot/flowplot.cgi?lid=MYDW1>
- Outflows: Starting August 15 and through September 30, there is potential for the minimum flow to reset from 2K cfs if Mayfield releases meet or exceed 5K cfs for consecutive 5-day period (daily mean flow). If flows meet/exceed 5K cfs, spawning surveys will be required. If redds are present, the level of minimum flows will be established after consultation with FTC or agencies. These flows are not to exceed the lesser of:
 - 8" below stage height of the highest consecutive 5-day average
 - 5K cfs August 15 - September 30.



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 she continues to work with TPU's Matt Peter and others on the Barrier Dam repair which will require a WQPP Plan and a construction stormwater general permit. Construction is set to begin in June of 2021. Drawings should be close to 80% in the next few weeks. TPU intends to use supersacks filled with gravel equivalent to 1K cubic yards for the construction. They hope to reuse these for the second and third phases of construction, but there is a possibility that this gravel could be released to the river as gravel augmentation at the end of each phase (there will be three phases over three August 04, 2020 FTC Meeting

years). Water-quality related considerations include where the sacks would be stored, dewatering, etc. She also noted the DNR access road is quite long. If TPU is considering doing gravel augmentation at a point bar on the other side of the meander from where the Barrier Dam repair will take place, now would be time to think about road construction. She also announced that Ecology has approved the amendment for the Mill Creek boat ramp maintenance WQPP. Currently, TPU is removing this debris to the detriment of the river. She suggested not disrupting the natural process and allowing the Mill Creek landslide material to move downstream. She thinks there should be a conversation about moving the boat ramp to avoid having to remove gravel in the future. She has received the WQPP for Blue Creek but hasn't had a chance to review it yet. She is still awaiting Kosmos data summary report from contractor HartCrowser.

Eric thanked Carol for this comprehensive update. Carol expressed appreciation for Eric and Jamie's work on quantifying the landslide material at Mill Creek and the WQPP. She also expressed concern about the "boneyard" as staging area for the Barrier Dam rebuild. For example, will there be enough room for turning around the backhoe?

Downstream Adaptive Management TWG: Matt reported there will be a review by TPU and LCPUD of proposed recommendations for the upcoming season. TPU is currently reviewing spring data and to see how it will inform the recommendations. He reminded all that this year's spring trends in FCE look 15-20% lower than prior two years for Spring Chinook and Coho. Reasons for this reduction may be linked to the environmental impact of the block study design operational issues, the floor geometry of the capture zone, and/or this year's higher flows.

Fisheries Essential Operations: Eric began his report by announcing they are fully operating again while observing Covid-19 restrictions (6' between employees, wearing masks when indoors, etc.). He also explained they are experiencing a shortage of Spring Chinook adults for this year's broodstock, along with an excess of hatchery Spring Chinook juveniles from last year's collection. In addition, Friends of the Cowlitz (FOC) are still working to secure access to their net pen site so it is yet to be determined if they have a need for the juveniles allocated for that project. There is an excess of 74K Spring Chinook juveniles from high survival rate at the hatchery and 58K set aside for the net pens. They plan to release 74K of these fish with the 16 fish/lb. group on station later this week. TPU normally holds onto the FOC fish until they are 10-12 fish/lb. so releasing the excess at this size should be fine. WDFW is currently in discussions with the FOC regarding the net pen site and the 58K juveniles allocated for their net pens.

This is the second year in a row of releasing an "excess" group without being able to evaluate their performance. It would be helpful to be able to do something in advance in addition to existing marking, to help us to understand rearing, size, etc. to measure the performance of these excess juveniles in the future. It is difficult to get accurate inventories in the spring because there is no estimate of abundance since initial ponding phase. Inventory of the fish before marking is not standard nor an advised practice due to space constraints and related fish health concerns. Might there be ways to isolate the juvenile CWT fish until being certain of the release strategies for the entire cohort? Perhaps we could have a contingency plan in place that calls for marking a small portion of these fish. Further discussions along these lines would be helpful. We need the program to be sufficiently flexible to optimize release strategies and evaluate all release strategies, even if they are in excess.

Kudos to WDFW and TPU hatchery staff for doing an outstanding job of the mass marking during the pandemic. The staff was able to get through all the Fall Chinook marking and then mark additional fish as well. Mortality levels have been low. What a great team effort!

- **Action Item:** All - Let Chris Foster know if you would like to be added to the distribution of the weekly CFFF report.

CRR Fund: Travis announced that TPU is working with the Cowlitz Tribe to ensure the funding awarded last year for their Yellowjacket Creek project moves forward. TPU will be reevaluating priorities and updating strategies for future project funding in the next few months since CRR is in an off year. Travis thanked Peggy and Paul for suggesting this would be a good opportunity to reestablish the subcommittee to help move the program forward on a timely basis. He will give an update on this in late fall/early winter and will check to see if there is an associated FERC order on this. Peggy reminded all that the grant round on hold was for solicitation for projects in 2020. The next grant round for soliciting projects should be in 2021 so grant application materials would need to be done before the start of the 2021 round. Paul suggested it would be good to move quickly to try to secure any matching funds from state or federal sources before those funds dry up, given the pandemic. Another decision document would be required, if TPU proposes to put the 2021 grant round on hold.

FTC Work Plan: Travis will bring a draft 2021 work Plan to the next meeting. It will include priorities for the year, associated review periods, etc.

Gravel Augmentation: The matrix Florian put together with site locations for possible treatment as gravel augmentation is now undergoing internal review at TPU. The gravel in the super sacks for the Diversion Dam repair work could be released and contribute to the gravel augmentation. TPU is trying to spec that material to match the gravel size specified in the augmentation plan. They are currently favoring acquiring new material instead of using the gravel from the existing augmentation pile. High flows this last season helped to distribute some gravel from the existing pile. Carol noted that the landslide at the Barrier Dam is a natural source of gravel that is being cut off by TPU. She also asked if they might consider replacing future gravel augmentation with engineered log jams. Travis looks forward to further discussion around using natural elements for part of the gravel supply. There were questions about decision documents on this and the possibility of forming a gravel augmentation subcommittee. Immediately after this discussion, Travis emailed out two decision documents relative to gravel augmentation, noting that the 2019.11 decision document includes a placeholder for continued updates following the development and sharing of a draft work plan. He further noted that prior to COVID-19, TPU shared a draft work plan and Florian developed a table to share concepts with the FTC. This document is in internal final draft review prior to sending it back to FTC for review with an eye towards developing a project planning and permitting strategy that will likely result in a 2021 placement effort. Once the document goes back to the FTC (targeting September 2020), the concept of developing a subcommittee may make sense to engage for a final placement strategy.

- **Action Item:** Travis – Look at setting up a subcommittee and amending the last approved decision document to include not placing gravel in 2020. Send out a summary of TPU's current plans for 2020.

M&E Subgroup: The June meeting was extremely productive. Notes from that meeting have been sent out to all. Phil reported they didn't meet in July. In the meantime, they have been gathering all the CWT data for estimating SAR for different release groups of Spring

Chinook. These data should be available for the M&E Subgroup to review at their next meeting on August 19. They will also be discussing life cycle models at that time. They are also looking forward to moving the SAR piece forward. Phil again invited folks to let him or any other member of the subgroup know of any topics you want this group to address.

CF Minimum Instream Flow: Peggy explained that decisions made for the Cowlitz Falls process are not under FTC control. The CF license says when Riffe Lake is at 749' elevation, minimum flows from CF Dam are to be 1K cfs (or matched inflow if less than 1K cfs). When inflows are less than LCPUD's minimum generation capacity LCPUD has to spill 1K cfs (or match inflows if less than 1K cfs). She reminded all that in the past, the FTC has asked LCPUD if they would they pass the minimum flows through the fish collector rather than spilling directly into Riffe Lake. Currently the fish collector capacity is 500 cfs. The license says any temporary reductions in minimum flows must be made by WDFW together with LCPUD. Peggy has a letter from LCPUD requesting the MIF be reduced to 500 cfs. In the past, she has included a note in WDFW's response letter to LCPUD that the FTC supports this action and is seeking approval to include a statement of FTC support. Matt noted that the operations are a bit different this year and how that might impact the letter that Peggy sends. Laura reported that Unit 1 is not functioning well enough to run below 18 megawatts. LCPUD is concerned about running Unit 2 that low. They think this probably won't happen because they are going to have a generator outage in September to repair Unit 1. Peggy noted that approving the reduction in minimum flows does not preclude the PUD from dropping generation if they can do it this year. Chris Foster reported they are trying to adapt to different seasonal variations. It is his understanding the reduction of minimum flow serves as an "insurance policy" in support of fish collection should LCPUD units fail to operate at lower flows which may cause vibration/cavitation concerns. This season, the PUD is going to try to pass as much water as they can through their units to reduce the amount of spill that is required. After discussion, the FTC agreed that Peggy can include a note of their support in her letter.

FHMP / APR Update
Presenter: Matt Bleich

Matt shared what he presented to the CRAG on July 23. He was pleased to announce the draft revised FHMP was just released for public review – a week ahead of schedule! Feedback from the public will be discussed/incorporated at the next (and final) FHMP Workshop. In the meantime, this presentation entitled “2020 FHMP and APR Public Engagement” is similar to what he will present at the August 12 virtual public meeting.

FHMP Schedule		
Action Item	Date	Responsible Party
Public Comment Solicited	August 2019	Public
Document Preparation/ Workshops completed	October 2019	Tacoma/FTC
Review Complete Draft FHMP (continuing solicitation of public comments)	11/18/19 – 5/30/20	FTC
Unresolved Topics Workshops	2/15/20 – 3/15/20	Tacoma/FTC
Unresolved Interim Plan Document	4/1/20 – 6/30/20	Tacoma/FTC
Edit Completed Draft FHMP	6/1/20 – 7/31/20	Tacoma/FTC
Public Review Draft Final FHMP	8/1/20 – 9/7/20	Public
Incorporate Comments and Finalize FHMP	9/7/20 – 10/7/20	Tacoma
File FHMP with FERC	10/18/20	Tacoma

The highlighted lines in the above show that we are about a week early compared with the schedule submitted to FERC. This allows ample time for public review. The presentation includes what is and is not included in the FHMP and previews the overview sections that include harvest summary data, down to population level, along with trending information and the current and proposed hatchery programs for each species.

This year's APR doesn't include any recommended changes from last year. The presentation, therefore, will show the 2020 Hatchery Production Plan:

Species	Before 2011 FHMP Update	2017 APR Goal	2018 APR Goal	2019 APR Goal	2020 APR Goal
Fall Chinook	4,800,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000	3,500,000
Spring Chinook	959,800	1,738,529	1,738,529	1,738,529	1,738,529
Coho	2,835,000	2,178,000	2,178,000	2,178,000	2,178,000
Winter Steelhead	690,000	647,000	647,000	647,000	647,000
Summer Steelhead	550,000	625,000	650,000	650,000	650,000
Cutthroat	160,000	100,599	100,599	100,599	100,599

Bryce noted that the APR process is an FTC process. He hopes FTC members can attend.

Action Item: All – Make every effort to attend the virtual meeting on August 12.

Tilton Release Site

Presenter: Eric Shoblom

Eric presented a detailed review of this project which was constructed for the benefit of both harvest and recovery. The new site at the Bremer Bridge abutment is 9 miles downstream of Gust Backstrom Park, allowing an additional 9 miles of habitat for the fish. The site will serve as a backup option and allow for spatial separation of HOR and NORs. Challenges associated with the site include the fact that the Tilton River is very dynamic. There were many design and safety issues. There was also a focus on making sure the site didn't end up looking like a fun place to recreate. Several water tests were conducted to ensure the site would be able to function properly. As a result, they laid asphalt to address the potential for erosion. They also made a gasket, so water no longer spills out of the sides of the flume. For the fish release test, they used a 10x40' net, folded over and sewn to create a two-layered "basket" for the evaluation which was conducted June 30. Water depth that day was 7'. Half of the water from the tank was drained and 17 Spring Chinook jacks were released. Four of the fish escaped over the side of the net. The 13 fish that were left in the net were removed one at a time using an adult dip net. They collected floy tag data and inspected them for any damage. No scarring or abrasions were observed. The fish were euthanized after being processed.

Bryce noted that WDFW had hoped our standard surplus process of using Riffe Lake or the foodbank would have been used instead of euthanizing the fish. Eric responded that euthanizing then seemed the most pragmatic action to take as he had checked with NOAA but didn't get a response back. Bryce explained that NOAA doesn't have transport authority. For future reference, the transport, movement, and disposition of the fish relies on WDFW management authority and they should have been included in the discussion.

Next steps include watching carefully to ensure the site is suitable for release during low flows. There were 306 cfs for the evaluation and only 106 cfs on the day of this meeting. Bryce reminded all that one of the main reasons we needed a second site was to make sure we had a site that would function during low flows for Fall Chinook and Coho NORs. Fishermen expect that we will be using the site this fall. Eric replied that the pool was 7' deep for the evaluation at 306 cfs, so he expects the site to function well at low flows. They will also set fishing boundaries. Josua has set up a meeting with WDFW Enforcement to discuss the fishing boundary area and the regs for the release site at the Bremer Bridge. The intent of this site for Fall Chinook is to use it only for the NORs.

Potential Coal Creek Release Site: Eric announced TPU is considering constructing of an additional site just upstream of Packwood on the Upper Cowlitz for additional redundancy. The Franklin Release Site is not always reliable. It would also be good to have more fisheries management options with two different sites. TPU has begun talking with county engineers about this. When asked if TPU is also looking at another site for the Cispus River, Eric and Phil replied that they have looked at the Cispus. It is pretty much without roads and USFS property. The places where they can get close to the river are very shallow with large cobbles. Given that, they are putting their attention on Coal Creek location currently.

Hatchery Operations: Out-of-basin Broodstock for Spring Chinook

Presenter: Bryce Glaser

Bryce announced that at the last FTC meeting we were projecting significant shortfalls in this year's spring Chinook adult return and in achieving broodstock goals for this year's production. WDFW is looking at mitigating this poor return by using some excess Kalama spring chinook as a backfill for future harvest augmentation. WDFW held a follow-up meeting in mid-June to walk thru the shortfall backfill proposal with FTC members who had questions/concerns about WDFW's proposal. The meeting covered two topics:

1. An immediate decision about the use of NOR spring Chinook returns. Should we continue the current protocol of putting all NOR's upstream? Or begin to incorporate some into broodstock?
2. Walking through WDFW's proposed plan to backfill the shortfall with Kalama spring Chinook for harvest augmentation purposes.

At the meeting, all agreed to continue to pass NOR Spring Chinook upstream and not incorporate NOR's into broodstock while we work through this year's issues. The proposal to bring in Kalama Spring Chinook was based on mitigating harvest opportunity in the future. WDFW proposed that all Cowlitz River production would be adipose-fin intact with 100% CWT tagging to maximize survival of those fish (i.e., limiting harvest). All Kalama fish used as a backfill would be differentially marked so they would be identifiable upon return. NOAA expressed some biological concerns about potential introgression, which WDFW saw as being minimal. Next steps identified at the end of that meeting included continuing discussions with TPU around logistics, and cost sharing; and following up with NOAA Fisheries about concerns surrounding use of Kalama fish for the Cowlitz backfill.

Since that time, WDFW has had some email communication on this with NOAA, whose concerns remain, and they currently don't support the approach of backfill with Kalama. These discussions have now been elevated within WDFW and NOAA and include discussions of overall options for the Kalama hatchery spring Chinook program itself, which is propagated at the Kalama Falls Hatchery operated by WDFW and funded

through the Mitchell Act Grant (NOAA). As these discussions continue, Kalama adult spring Chinook return numbers have slowed. This buys some additional time for these discussions. WDFW still anticipates a surplus at Kalama, though not as large as originally anticipated. Stay tuned for additional updates.

FTC Protocols | FTC Meeting Frequency

Presenter: Travis Nelson

Protocols: Since the last meeting, Paul and Peggy worked together to resolve concerns. WDFW is currently reviewing the changes and the draft should be available for FTC review shortly. They hope to complete the WDFW internal review soon. It is important to ensure the subcommittees are clearly established with a purpose/charter. Peggy noted the subcommittee section has not changed since the last draft.

Travis announced that, after careful review of budgetary and COVID-19 restrictions, along with the FTC workload, it makes sense to go back to a monthly meeting schedule. The next FTC meeting will be September 1.

- **Action Item:** All – Review new draft of Protocols that will be emailed out on August 14 along with the today's draft meeting summary so they can be approved at the next meeting.
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Meeting Evaluation

- Still some technical glitches, especially with some folks on the phone
- Appreciate people who were locked out didn't get mad
- Good facilitation
- Good pace of meeting
- Hope we will get more Action Items checked off
- Great presentations
- Very productive
- Got out a few minutes early
- Happy we honored break times.
- Quotable Quote: *"Be true to your work, your word, and your friend."* Henry David Thoreau

Potential Topics for September 1 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
 - Set topics for October FTC Meeting (to include Satellite Rearing)
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Parking Lot

- Presentation by TPU Power Management
- Review Steelhead Recycling Program