

**Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project**  
**FERC No. 2016**  
**Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee**  
**Final Meeting Summary**  
September 5, 2023 from 9:30 – 3:30

**FTC Representative Attendees:**

Travis Nelson	TPU
Anne Baxter	Ecology
Bryce Glaser	WDFW

**Additional Attendees:**

Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Peggy Miller	WDFW
John Serl	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Kristopher Warner	WDFW
Cam Penner-Ash	Ecology
Matt Peter	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Scott Gibson	TPU
Melora Shelton	TPU
Steve Manlow	LCFRB
Denise Smee	LCFRB
Steve West	LCFRB
Michael Boyles	BPA
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

**Public Attendees:** Jack Tipping and Randy LeDuc

**Remaining 2023 FTC Meeting Dates:** October 3, November 7, December 5 (in person)

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**Approval of August Meeting Summary**

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

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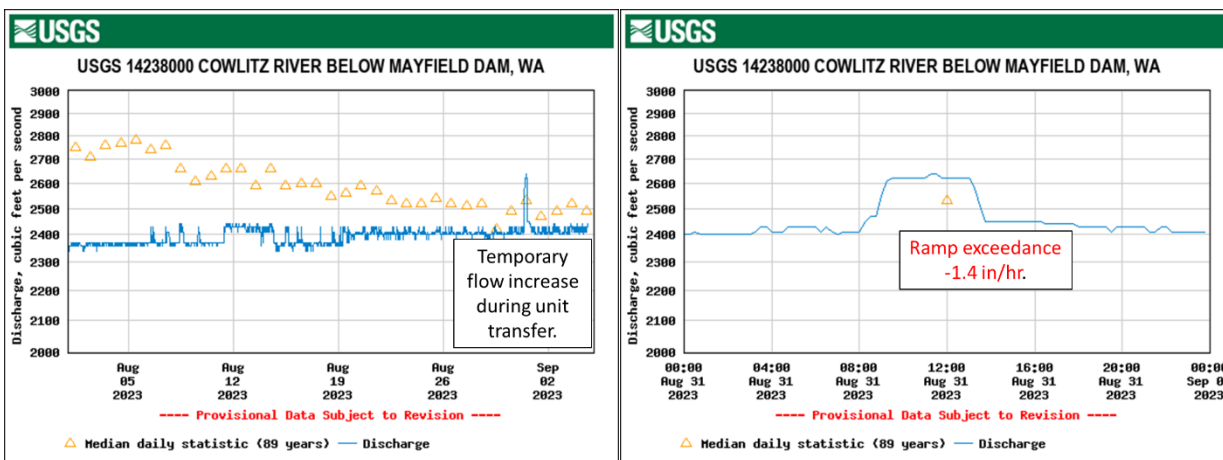
**Announcements**

- We were pleased to welcome Cam Penner-Ash to the group. Cam is the Cleanup Project Manager for the Ecology's Southwest Regional Office. He is the new coordinator on the Kosmos Riffe Lake Cleanup and will be providing quarterly updates on this to the FTC.
- Tacoma was excited to share that Sam Gibbons has joined Tacoma as the new Natural Resource Owners Representative. He will be representing various Natural Resources sections or personnel on complex projects like the Trout Hatchery Remodel and Mayfield Juvenile Bypass System upgrades. While we wish him well in this new role, this organizational shift is not limerick worthy.
- Tacoma is currently advertising for these 3 positions: Senior Fisheries Scientist, Senior Fish Passage Specialist, and a Science and Research Biologist. Please visit TPU Jobs for details.

**Updates**

## Hydro Operations – Melora (presentation emailed on September 4)

- Inflows: Daily average flows for August was 1,175 cfs and are currently at 1,178 cfs (September 3). September average inflows are about 1,700 cfs. With very little precipitation in July and August, we continue being well below the average for the water year.
- Storage: Riffe's current elevation is 717' (~12' lower than the last 5-year average). Both Mossyrock short lane and North Taidnapam ramps are closed.
- Outflows: On August 31, a planned unit transfer resulted in a ramp exceedance of -1.4 inch/hr. Tacoma is taking measures to prevent this from happening in the future. This incident will be included in the Annual 402 report to FERC.
- 10-day Forecast: Typical - warm and dry and remaining so for the next 3 months. Without precipitation, the Mossyrock long lane may close before the end of September (~708'). Melora will let WDFW know if this occurs. The freezing level is above 11K'. Outflows are expected to be 2,360 cfs unless there is a load demand. Inflows should be ~1.2K 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://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/>

## Water Quality/Monitoring

Copper Canyon Creek Whitewater Takeout site: Potential fire concerns resulted in road closures that made the site inaccessible. No temperature issues have been reported there.

Temperature Data: Annual hatchery reports include temperature data that WDFW records at the hatchery. Eric would be the contact for Anne to receive temperature data. Matt noted the temperature loggers are utilized for the passage study and are not installed year-round. The loggers associated with the debris deflector will come out following the annual passage assessment.

- Action Item: Matt P to send out temp data charts illustrating additional isotherms for the boat barrier vertical array as well as the North and South Debris Deflector vertical arrays.

Kosmos Site: Tacoma has completed 8/15 sampling of deep wells and believes they can move forward with the Remedial Investigation (RI) report. Once data are validated the RI report is due to Ecology within 90 days. Following filing of the RI report and satisfaction of the existing Agreed Order (AO), Ecology will issue a new AO which will lead to the creation of a draft clean-up action plan.

North Shore fishing trail adjacent to the Mossyrock Dam: This trail was closed due to rock fall safety issues. After investigation, Tacoma decided to do some rock scaling to get the trail to a condition where it is safe for people to return. The work will all be done in the dry. They are securing the necessary permits.

Dredging at the Blue Creek Weir: Anne asked if there were photos of this. Matt is still waiting for the report from the PM on site. Jamie will share this when he is back in the office. Anne expressed concern that the Water Quality Protection Plan (WQPP) had not been approved. She and Matt discussed this over the lunch break. Tacoma will work with Ecology to address potential changes / BMPs that could be made to adaptively manage water quality related concerns. They will also work to revise the WQPP.

### Gravel Augmentation

Matt reported ~800 cubic yards of gravel were delivered the week of August 28. There were issues with the gravel slinger which ended up dropping and piling gravel into riparian zone. That machine broke down and was replaced by a slinger with a new belt which resulted in much more accurate placement. Anne showed photos of the gravel fell into the riparian zone. Peggy asked what they planned to do about the gravel in the riparian zones. Matt will arrange a trip out to the site before the end of October with WDFW, DNR, the County, and other stakeholders to discuss mitigation options and how best to move forward. Flexibility has been written into the plan. Matt reminded all there will be no more augmentation this year. Next year, Tacoma will continue per the new plan that was approved at the last FTC meeting.

### Fish Facilities

Eric reported the Cowlitz Facilities Team is still in the process of hiring three seasonal PSMFC Fisheries Technician positions to help out at the separator and Mayfield counting house.

#### Separator:

- Return numbers are currently low at the separator. The spring Chinook are starting to drop eggs on the table and the summer steelhead are starting to turn dark. They are getting more cutthroat and fall Chinook and the coho are slowly trickling in.
- Tacoma's last haul of fish to the LCPUD Copper Canyon Creek Whitewater Takeout site was on August 14 as Port Blakley shut the 300 Road down for fire danger on August 31. To date, a total of 685 fish have been released at the site.
- August 28 was the last week for steelhead recycling. A total of 1,759 summer steelhead were recycled to the I-5 boat ramp this year.

#### Brood Collection:

- Tacoma is currently collecting fall Chinook, summer steelhead, coho, and cutthroat broodstock.
- After the first spawn of spring Chinook, they are also collecting 30 additional females due to smaller females with lower-than-average fecundity. It is pretty easy telling the falls and springers apart for collection.
- At the end of August, Eric noted they were 241 adult fall Chinook behind for collection,

#### Mayfield Counting House:

- All Chinook and coho are getting snout tagged and all steelhead and cutthroat receive a dorsal sinus tag.
- Total numbers have dropped a little over the last couple of weeks (typical for this time of year). Those numbers are expected to climb again this month.
- We are currently seeing about twice as many Chinook as coho. There have only been a few steelhead each week for the last couple of weeks.

### Satellite Rearing

Eric reported Tacoma is still looking for an approach to using the Energy Northwest (EN) site as a Satellite Rearing facility although there are complications associated with the two FERC projects intersecting. They are working through these challenges. This is why they are now focusing more closely on setting up the Mayfield Net Pen Pilot project in hope that, if successful, it could be a potential Satellite Rearing facility or other type of program.

He reminded all that the Mayfield Net Pen Pilot project is a product from the public's request during last year's APR (Annual Program Review) meeting where we gave the option of shifting some of the coho production from the hatchery into net pens in order to make more space in the hatchery to produce either more or larger spring Chinook. Success of this program will be measured by comparing coho survival in the hatchery vs. survival in the net pens. If similar, or better survival is achieved in the net pens, the program will be considered a success and they will look to move even more of the coho production into the net pens and raise more spring Chinook in the hatchery.

Stay tuned to hear more as Tacoma evaluates the viability of this program which carries with it the potential to break ground for either a Satellite Rearing facility, a CRR/HAP program, or other opportunity for outside engagement.

#### Cispus Release Site (Tom Music Bridge)

Laura emailed Lyn that she is waiting for some documents from the USFS to send to the USACE. She will be at the next meeting and hopes to have more news at that time.

#### Monitoring & Evaluation Subgroup

This group's meetings have been focused on M&E Plan development, including the transport plan for the two release sites on the Tilton. Bryce offered to review the plan and send it out to the group. Scott noted the plan may be impacted by the new marking plan which has resulted in seeing the return of some Chinook jacks. Bryce noted some issues such as spring Chinook transport have been discussed through email.

- Action Item: Bryce to review the M&E plan and send it out to the group in advance of the next meeting/email discussion.

#### HGMP Submitted

Bryce noted the Cowlitz Hatchery Genetic Management Plan was submitted to NOAA Fisheries at the end of August. In so doing, they worked hard to incorporate the Transition Plans. They are currently waiting for the services to respond.

#### Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group (TWG)

No report this month due to the Annual Program Review.

- Action Item: John to send out marked up draft of Charter for this Subgroup.

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### **Model Toxics Control Act and Riffe Lake**

#### **Presenter: Cam Penner-Ash**

Cam Penner-Ash is the new formal site manager for Riffe Lake cleanup. He began by providing a summary of the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) followed by an overview of the associated stages of cleanup. He then reviewed the history of the Kosmos site at Riffe Lake. The first seep of black oily liquid was discovered at the site in April, 2019 and Ecology was notified. In November 2019 Tacoma declared an emergency to implement Independent Remedial Action (IRA). The Remedial Investigation Work Plan was issued at the end of 2021 in order to propose which investigation work would be required to complete the Remedial Investigation document. The upcoming Remedial Investigation document (anticipated end of 2023) will sum up where things are located and how they

got there. Cam welcomes any Riffe Lake cleanup related questions ([cam.penner-ash@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:cam.penner-ash@ecy.wa.gov)). All of the upcoming documents will eventually undergo public comment. He will try to remind people of these during his quarterly updates. The comment periods are a good opportunity to have any concerns or questions addressed about the cleanup process. Cam anticipates that the next FTC meeting that he will attend will be in December 2023.

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## **2023 APR (Annual Program Review) Process**

**Presenter: Eric Shoblom**

The Cowlitz Annual Program Review and Science Conference took place on August 22. This provided an opportunity to meet with the public and present a population and hatchery program management strategy for the coming season. The deadline for APR public input was September 1. Feedback received is being shared with the FTC for consideration at today's meeting. Eric reviewed the process:

- FHMP – Transition plans
  - Bio programming
  - Annual Program review process - essentially the fish production plan for each species
  - Implementation

Eric reminded all that 2022 was the first year to follow the new FHMP Transition Plans. The second public APR meeting will be part of the October 3 FTC meeting. He reviewed the results of the proposed production plan for each species:

- Spring Chinook
  - Option 1 is proposed (poundage neutral, etc.) and small, net pen pilot program to ensure and make sure survivals are good in the net pens. If all goes well, then switch to Option 2 (increases pounds, etc.) for one year. After the initial year, additional funding or a new strategy will be needed to continue Option 2.
- Coho
  - Recommending size and release strategy remain the same. Coho are more resilient so would be good fit for net pen program. Shift 96K to net pens to experiment.
- Fall Chinook
  - Retain existing program, improved monitoring and hatchery rearing conditions. Marking at Mayfield.
- Winter Steelhead:
  - Collected 100% of early arrivals. Two transitions are well underway, creating an earlier lower Cowlitz winter run and reallocating production to the Tilton and UCR:
    - LC Winters: Reduce by 170K; Tilton Winters: Increase by 52K; UCR Winters: Increase by 118K.
- Summer Steelhead and Cutthroat
  - No Transition Plans – keep both programs the same as last year.

Eric hasn't received any public feedback via email. He noted that Larry Pryor wanted to see a sub-yearling Spring Chinook program and Tacoma is investigating a program very similar to that for the satellite rearing program. Randy LeDuc is supportive of the pilot program for Spring Chinook. Jack Tipping also supported Option 2. Bryce noted WDFW also supported the pilot program to make sure it is a viable option before moving forward with Option 2. They had hoped to do a more formal SAR analysis of the Mayfield fall Chinook net pen program with increased hatchery M&E availability at WDFW. Eric will introduce a draft DD to memorialize the APR decisions at the October FTC meeting.

## COWLITZ ANNUAL PRODUCTION REVIEW DECISIONS

Species	Before 2011 FHMP Update	2019 APR Goal	2020 APR Goal	2021 APR Goal	2022 APR Goal	2023 APR Goal
Fall Chinook	4,800,000	3,500,000	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	1,678,000	1,678,000
Coho	2,835,000	2,178,000	2,178,000	2,178,000	2,178,000	2,178,000
Winter Steelhead	690,000	647,000	647,000	647,000	647,000	647,000
Summer Steelhead	550,000	625,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000
Cutthroat	160,000	100,599	100,599	100,599	100,599	100,599

- **Action Item:** Eric to send out draft DD by September 26.

### LCPUD Dam Operations

**Presenter: Lyn for Russell Page**

Lyn provided the following update from Russell as he was unable to attend the meeting:

- Hatch cover work is complete, and the hatch cover has been re-installed. They are closing out that project this week.
- Unit 1 is currently in outage and will be in outage through September and into October.
- They are working on a strategy to repair broken cross members on their trash rack and may be pulling them in early fall to complete the repairs.
- A riverine drawdown and monitoring procedure is being developed for the drawdown scheduled for Q1 of 2024, to ensure water quality and license obligations are followed during the entire process. This will be presented to the FTC this fall.

### Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery Fund / Habitat and Production (HAP) Subgroup

**Presenters: Denise Smee and Melora Shelton**

#### CRR Funding:

Having received no comment or questions since the last meeting, Denise walked through again the draft DD for CRR funding recommendations (2023-05). The document includes active links to LCFRB's Google Drive folders with project information. Melora updated the total funding for the two projects to \$218,696. With that edit, the DD was approved by consensus of voting members present.

#### Other Updates:

- The LCFRB will host a Lessons Learned TAC meeting for the 2024 CRR and SFRB grant rounds on September 13. Denise will send out the agenda. Voting members of the FTC are invited to participate in this meeting. Other members are welcome to attend as public.
- CRR Field Tour on September 26. Let Denise know if you can/can't attend by September 8.
- The Cispus Yellow Jacket Phase IV Project is not yet under contract. There is an agreement with the RCO as match for CRR grant. There has been no change to the SOW.
- Quarterly reports are starting to come in. Folks have been busy with project implementation.

#### Balance on CRR fund grants awarded to date:

- 8/28 CRR Balance: \$17,568,913.61 (or ~\$17.6 M)
- Awards: 2019-2022: \$3,588,307 (or ~\$3.6 M, supporting total project values of ~\$6.5 M)

#### HAP Subcommittee:

Hatchery Associated Projects DD 2023-03. Melora reminded all this was reviewed at the last FTC meeting and no further comments were received. The DD calls for moving forward with including HAP projects in the CRR Grant round in 2024 along with associated documents based on the 2023 grant round. WDFW requested a wording edit, after which the DD was approved with that edit by voting members present.

On August 21 the HAP Subcommittee met and began to list different types of projects that might be implemented. These discussions will continue at future meetings on September 20, with M&E members invited to attend at the next meeting (either Oct 3 or Oct 18, pending APR wrap up schedule). They will keep the FTC in the loop and reach out for feedback/suggestions.

Next steps: A draft DD with an updated implementation strategy will be presented at the November FTC meeting and the decision will be requested at the December meeting.

In closing, Melora showed Google map of Yellow Jacket Creek project to illustrate restoration efforts over the years, including 2023 construction. It was quite impressive! John noted in the chat that he thinks "LCPUD and the USFS installed and buried some engineered log jams upstream of the FR28 road bridge on Yellowjacket Creek in the early 2000s. The whole lower Yellowjacket Creek should have great habitat in the future!"

#### **Action Items:**

- All: By September 8 let Denise know ASAP if you plan to attend (or not) the Lessons Learned Meeting and/or the field tour.
- Travis: Send out the DDs approved by consensus at this meeting to other FTC members not at the meeting for electronic approval.

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#### **Public Comment Period #1 - Agenda related**

Randy:

- Regarding summer steelhead recycling: Can this be extended a couple of weeks in Sept if we are selective? Can it also be possible to recycle fish more than once?

Bryce: If the duration is extended, the quality of fish starts to decline, so there is less incentive for anglers to keep them. Also, autumn rainfall tends to cause the fish to move into the tributaries. Bryce will bring this up with the M&E Group for consideration. Recycling more than once. Less concern about stray and more concern with return to creel and trucking costs. Creel sampling showed 30% of the fish people caught were recycled.

- Will the net pens we move the silvers into stay at the end of the lake or will they be moved up to the trout hatchery?

Eric: For this pilot project, the coho would be in the net pens over the winter months. There is still the potential to have a program with net pens further up the reservoir, but the current proposal is to keep them near the dam.

Jack:

- Thanked Bryce for agreeing to look into recycling fish more than once as well as extending the period. In the Chat, he noted summer steelhead recycling numbers were far below the 6,600 cap. He suggested the M&E team 1) Please determine if there are detrimental effects of recycling fish more than once. 2) Please determine if there are detrimental effects of recycling fish into mid-September.
- Regarding CRR fund allocations, he thinks future upstream habitat projects should be on hold until FCEs at Cowlitz Falls reach at least 80%, unless there is a metric of success as

measured in fish numbers. Spending money without a metric of success may not be prudent.

Maybe keep the money in escrow until FCE improves at the dam?

John: John asked why 80%? FCEs for steelhead, coho, may already be close to that. Even before the Northshore collector went in, steelhead and coho FCEs were 60-80%.

Peggy: If unspent funds were put into escrow, would they carry over beyond this license period?

Travis: It is Tacoma's obligation and in Tacoma's interest to spend that money before the current license expires. FERC wouldn't allow it to be carried over.

Steve M: Committed to follow up with Jack on how the efficacy of habitat work is being evaluated in terms of fish population responses. This is difficult to do on a project-by-project scale. We are learning as we go.

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### **Topics for October 3, 2023 FTC Meeting**

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities, Cispus Release Site
  - LCPUD Cowlitz Falls Dam Operations
  - Downstream Adaptive Management TWG
  - Follow-up on Spring Flow Reduction and Summer Ops
  - CRR Fund / HAP Subcommittee
  - 2023 APR Process Debrief – Introduction of Draft DD
  - Preview November FTC Meeting topics
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### **Meeting Evaluation**

- Well attended and appreciated Randy and Jack joining us
- Approved two DDs
- Reconciled the misunderstanding on the WQPP
- Appreciated information on fires downstream of the Packwood Project

### **Josua's Inspirational Quote**

Josua introduced the quote by acknowledging many of us have been struggling with sufficient personnel given the workload and how we are in the midst of change, including change of season: "I think my favorite thing about seasons changing is the opportunity to look different." - Taylor Swift

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### **Public Comment Period #2 – Any Topic**

Randy:

- Asked Bryce on the condition of the chum project discussed earlier.

Bryce: The final decision on the Regional Chum assessment grant proposal will be made by the SRFB which meets September 13 and 14.

Steve: Sees this being funded. WDFW would go into contract with the RCO and move forward.

Jack:

- Thanks for the opportunity to comment.
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### **Closing Remarks**

Travis thanked everyone for working together so well. He also called out the great opportunities to get out there and catch some salmon. It's a pink salmon year!

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### **Parking Lot**

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