



PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee Conference Call

February 23, 2006 9 a.m.

Participant code: 277949

PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee Members

Kris Peterson/Mike Delarm, NOAA Fisheries

Kirk Truscott, Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW)

Tom Scribner, Yakama Nation (YN)

Jerry Marco, Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT)

Carl Merkle, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)

Chris Carlson, Grant PUD

Russell Langshaw, Grant PUD

Denny Rohr, D. Rohr & Assoc., facilitator

Conference Call Participants:

Tom Scribner, YN

Dave Carie, USFWS

Mike Delarm NOAA Fisheries

Kirk Truscott, WDFW

Cam Thomas, USFS

Denny Rohr, facilitator

Russ Langshaw, Grant PUD

Tom Dresser, Grant PUD

Shannon Lowry, Grant PUD

FINAL MINUTES

AGENDA

1. White River Public Outreach Strategy Discussion.
2. Release site update

Action Items:

- Grant will provide outline of questions to address long-term focus of WR program.
- Based on the outline of questions, subcommittee members will provide information concerning the WR program for use in any public outreach forum, i.e., website, press releases, and other public presentations.

MEETING MINUTES

Because of obstacles faced in the WR, Grant PUD internally put together a public relations strategy identifying a target audience. Subcommittee members were asked to provide comment on the strategy for discussion purposes.

Strategy: WDFW suggested including Northwest Steelheaders, Trout Unlimited, local fishing guide services, and other similar groups. Grant PUD confirmed its focus on not only those opposed to the activity in the WR, but also other interested parties. Following an internal meeting, NOAA Fisheries commented that the agency hopes the message is simple and identifies that the program exists because the species is at a high risk of extinction. The agency also hopes the subcommittee conveys that it is sensitive to the concerns of folks living in the White River (WR) area and that it is open to ideas. NOAA

stated its concern that there will be a specific road block if there is not an effort to incorporate the locals' needs into the plan.

Communication Tactics: WDFW suggested focusing any biological review of the WR stock and its status, historical run escapement, and unique stock characteristics to set the stage for the rationale of the action. NOAA added that the WR component needs to be restored before the Wenatchee is considered viable for delisting the UCR ESU. There is also a need to link it to the sub-basin plan in the Wenatchee Basin and its consistency with Salmon Recovery and Implementation Plan. NOAA indicated that the strategy needs to convey that it may not be a permanent supplementation program, but that the program would occur until restoration occurs. NOAA also noted that the captive brood program is not mutually exclusive to habitat actions and that the program can work in concert to achieve a goal of restoring the population. YN questioned whether the strategy is the same for Nason Creek and suggested a separate strategy be outlined for the other sub-basin. YN does not support combining the Nason Creek and White River communications strategies. NOAA indicated that the message is the same for both in terms of biological justification of the program. YN noted that no one has used "uniqueness of stock" when discussing the Nason Creek Basin. NOAA stated that the long-term objectives are similar. Grant PUD agrees with separating the strategies for each Basin and envisions presenting information specific to the each sub-basin, noting that recovery in the Wenatchee Basin as a whole is the larger picture. The subcommittee indicated their support of separating the communication strategies. Grant PUD will keep the strategy (which is for internal use only) as a combined document. However, while any presentation would begin as a "big picture" overview, it would then narrow to the specific information based on each watershed. USFS suggested taking specific names out of the strategy, but individualizing each presentation. NOAA plans to send comments on the strategy later today. YN requested that information on Grant PUD's website also be separated between the two sub-basins. Grant requested that biological information come from the other agencies. Grant PUD will provide an outline for the website at the next subcommittee meeting.

USFS comments: USFS noted it does not support NOAA's conclusion regarding the genetic difference of WR stock. However, because NOAA's conclusion concerning the stock is not negotiable, the opposition to the program is doing its own research. USFS suggested the subcommittee be ready to defend the program, regardless of the data. USFS noted that while NOAA's vision is to promote a stock of fish which is adapted to the WR, all there is to go on is the current genetic information (though there is a study coming which may alter that decision). Regardless of whether the WR stock is distinct now or whether the subcommittee wants to promote that distinction in the future, the strategy should be the same. USFS stated while there is potential for collaboration on some issues, there isn't on others and that the distinction needs to be well-defined. WDFW noted that the link to salmon recovery criteria (VSB) is important. Rohr questioned how the subcommittee should allow input on a seemingly fixed issue. USFS believes clearly defining where the subcommittee is willing to collaborate and where it is not is the most critical piece in terms of strategy. WDFW stated the conversation needs to not be about justifying augmentation, but rather asking folks to help develop the most meaningful strategies to meet the goal of the program. USFS suggested knowing the law on the issue inside and out is critical, and that if there is gray area in the BiOp, the gaps need to be filled in. USFS noted that the subcommittee cannot move forward with outreach to the public until the facts are straight and clearly understandable. For example, what is the program going to look like when it gets on the ground? Will it be a traditional hatchery facility? Will there be a weir? And if so, where will it go, what will it look like, and is there an alternative? USFS suggests that if the subcommittee determines it must have a facility to block fish from other tributaries in the Wenatchee Basin, then it needs to state that outright and send the message that a three-month exclusion weir is non-negotiable. If it is negotiable, then it needs to outline the alternatives (i.e., nets, etc). USFS also indicated that because the idea of a "temporary" weir has been discussed, the subcommittee has to be factual about what that would entail in terms of infrastructure. WDFW questioned whether public opposition is really about the function of the facility or about not wanting augmentation? YN reiterated USFS' stance that the subcommittee needs to be direct about the program. The subcommittee agreed that the strategy is sound, but that the content needs to be refined. Grant PUD will send questions specific to WR program issues to address with the public, with a focus on refining the discussion prior to presenting the information at a Wenatchee Watershed Planning Unit meeting in April or May.

USFS reiterated that obtaining a special-use permit from the agency would require an amendment to the forest plan because of the WRs proposed designation of Recreational and Wild and Scenic. WDFW noted it would be helpful to know what criteria USFS will use to make the determination that a weir would terminate the possibility of that designation. NOAA indicated the JFP should discuss the potential options to an exclusion weir.

Rohr suggested further discussion at the subcommittee's next meeting on March 16. NOAA reiterated that the topic needs to be on the March agenda.

Little White Salmon update: Issue is being presented to USFWS regional director. Don't anticipate any problems, but still awaiting final approval. An issue concerning fish-health issues, and rearing high-ELISA fish is on the table. They only want 150,000 low-ELISA fish reared at .06 density. WDFW suggested developing a contingency plan for 0-200,000 juveniles with moderate-ELISA fish. NOAA indicated its willingness to express to USFWS decision makers that the importance of taking an additional risk. YN polled the group on culling high-ELISA fish (150,000-200,000 eggs). WDFW stated agency staff would discuss the issue internally. YN requested that WDFW decide on an alternative. Because up to 90% of the BY02 spawners will be F2s, Grant PUD questioned whether spawner ELISA levels can be examined to determine if their off-spring will also be high-ELISA (i.e., if the F1 is high, will the F3 be high)? NOAA will discuss the issue with the regional director of USFWS. Grant PUD indicated its need for a budget estimate on the rearing and transfer. Grant PUD voiced its concern about releasing 300,000 smolts and the potential for overwhelming wild spawners when the adults return. If the transfer to Little White is limited to 150,000, where will the additional fish go? USFWS indicated its support of the transfer. NOAA requested this issue be put on the March agenda.

'06 Smolt Release: Log jam and pond site owner gave permission to release fish at either location. Grant PUD does not believe the pond site will be open because there is an 8-foot berm of snow. The landowners are willing to discuss future releases at the pond site.