



Priest Rapids Hatchery Subcommittee

Thursday, February 16, 2006

10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Grant PUD SeaTac Offices

PR Hatchery Subcommittee Members

Kris Petersen/Mike DeLarm, NMFS

Tom Scribner, YN

Dave Carie, USFWS

Carl Merkle, CTUIR

Jerry Marco, CCT

Kirk Truscott, WDFW

Russell Langshaw, GPUD

Denny Rohr, Facilitator

Meeting Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Approval/Finalize Meeting Minutes
 - A. January 11, 2006 Conference Call
 - B. January 25, 2006
 - C. February 9, 2006 Conference Call
- III. Meeting Management: Draft Meeting Protocols
- IV. Discussion of Nason Creek
- V. Discussion of White River
- VI. Public Relations Strategy
- VII. Next Meeting, March 16, 2006, SeaTac, 10:00 am

FINAL MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Jerry Marco, CCT; Chuck Peven, Chelan PUD; Kirk Truscott, WDFW; Tom Scribner, YN; Mike Delarm, NOAA Fisheries; Russell Langshaw, Grant PUD; Tom Dresser, Grant PUD; Shannon Lowry, Grant PUD; Denny Rohr, facilitator; Dave Carie, USFWS; Cameron Thomas, USFS (by phone).

DISTRIBUTED ITEMS:

- Biological Opinion YR 2005 Annual Report
- Re-send White River strategy document to subcommittee members. Members will respond to the document with comments through e-mail to Langshaw by Feb. 21. A conference call is scheduled for Feb. 23 at 9 a.m. Rohr will provide call-in number.
- WR Strategy Document
- Discussion topics from the Tuesday, Feb. 14 JFP meeting
- USFWS/YN proposal for BY2006-BY2007 egg takes

ACTION ITEMS:

- Send WR/Nason communication strategy outline to subcommittee members

- Will provide subcommittee members with Nason Creek conceptual design of footprint of weir structure.
- Grant PUD will provide an outline of the White River genetic analysis study plan by the subcommittee's next meeting

MINUTES:

Welcome and Introductions: Rohr welcomed attendees.

Approval/Finalize Meeting Minutes

- D. January 11, 2006 Conference Call - FINALIZED
- E. January 25, 2006 - FINALIZED
- F. February 9, 2006 Conference Call (not yet sent)

Meeting Management: Draft Meeting Protocols: Under construction

Discussion of Nason Creek:

Rearing: Grant PUD updated subcommittee members on activity in the Nason Creek area. Grant PUD engineers have developed a rearing facility conceptual design for purchased property. Staff is working to design a structure which complies with Chelan County Planning Department specifications. A pre-application meeting will be scheduled within the next two weeks, at which time Grant PUD will provide a conceptual design. The design is a plat map with raceways located out of the floodplain on a terrace 30 feet above the channel. Because the area is adjacent to the creek, there is concern about setback. YN expressed concern about public perception of the project. Because the parcel is located near an area which is already developed and next to a highway, there isn't as much concern about a structure being built in that area. YN expressed that there needs to be clarification about the type of structure which will be built. It doesn't appear Grant PUD will need a conditional-use permit because it is a fish facility, which should be allowed under the current zoning. YN indicated the agency's willingness to assist in the permitting process. Grant PUD noted that water drilling, water rights, and water right transfer issues are currently being addressed by staff.

Weir: Subcommittee members requested for review the current 30% weir design drawings. NOAA Fisheries requested they also be sent to NOAA's habitat subcommittee representative (Dale Bambrick). USFS noted Grant PUD's special-use permit application for a weir on Nason Creek submitted last fall is being processed, awaiting final feedback from a landscape architect. A final decision is expected by the end of the month. USFS stated that key stakeholders would receive a call prior to official letters being mailed. Grant staff asked if similar progress is being made on proposal in the White River area. USFS indicated that progress is being made and clarified that a request for a special-use permit goes through a screening process as required by federal regulation. That screening process is nearing completion and USFS expects to respond to the proposal by official letter by the end of the month. If the proposal is accepted, it triggers additional required permitting, including NEPA. If those requirements are met, then the special-use permit is granted at the end of the process. The timeline for the permitting process on the White River (10-acre clear cut piece of land across river from Tall Timbers on Sears Creek Bridge Road) is anticipated to be much lengthier than for Nason Creek.

Acclimation: Negotiations are currently underway between a landowner and Chelan County and Chelan-Douglas Land Trust for a five-year conservation easement. This landowner has proposed his assistance on the acclimation facility site, though Grant PUD must go through a bidding process for operation of such a facility. Chelan County and Chelan-Douglas Land Trust are considering pulling out of the conservation easement, because the groups believe an acclimation facility is inconsistent with a conservation easement. But Grant PUD has proposed a naturalized off-channel design with an infiltration gallery. The groups are also concerned that if a conservation easement and acclimation facility are both completed that there is potential for the relationship to be complicated and they do not have the resources to maintain a complicated easement. WDFW suggested proposing both a production and habitat component for the project, with a portion of the abandoned side-channel used for rearing and another for habitat restoration.

Grant PUD indicated its support of such a plan. For now, Grant PUD has halted movement on the project until Chelan County and Chelan-Douglas Land Trust makes a determination on the conservation easement. Grant PUD staff will give the two entities further information on the proposed facility design to assist in their decision process (should occur in the next 45-60 days). YN asked whether the landowner would still consider leasing the property if Grant PUD awarded the bid for operation and maintenance of the facility to another contractor. Grant PUD staff indicated that the landowner would possibly still be willing to negotiate the lease.

Discussion of White River: JFP met Tuesday, Feb. 14 concerning White River issues. *Added to agenda:* Grant PUD is moving forward on purchase of 17 acres in the White River Basin, which is currently in the appraisal phase. Chelan-Douglas Land Trust has a second offer on the table. NOAA asked if a second party could cost share for any amount over and above fair market value. Grant staff stated they would explore the possibility. Grant PUD is also moving forward on permitting because a large portion of the property falls in the floodplain.

1) Clarification of captive brood program direction

a) Five years of F1 collection or five years of F2 releases &

b) What happens if the genetics study indicates a mixed stock?

NOAA Fisheries indicated that new genetic information will be available soon, but until then Grant PUD needs to stay on the same path through 2009 with collection of F1s for the White River Captive Brood program. Once the genetic information is available then an internal decision will be made concerning the future of the program. Grant PUD clarified that it plans to move forward with the program, but that to manage the program as outlined in the BiOp, there must be a weir on the White River.

YN noted that if genetic analysis reveals that it is not a unique stock, then the program needs to be redefined because the agency won't consider the captive brood program successful.

Grant PUD stated that if genetic analysis determines the White River is a composite stock, Grant PUD will follow the science and propose to manage the stock as appropriate.

NOAA will contact Mike Ford on when the genetic analysis data can be expected. The agency will then discuss internally the data and how it affects the program. Discussion occurred concerning responsibility for determining WxW families to be incorporated into the White River Captive Brood program. Grant PUD and Chelan PUD reminded the committee that the methods used in 2005 were emergency measures and not precedent setting. Grant PUD and Chelan PUD both insisted that these methods will not be supported during 2006. YN suggested the issue be elevated to the PRCC.

Grant PUD stated that one of its staff members is currently trying to gather all available genetic information concerning the White River stock. How that information will be incorporated into a comprehensive genetic analysis will be presented in Grant PUD's study plan within the next month. WDFW questioned what the impetus was for a parallel study (to WDFW and NOAA Fisheries current reproductive study). Grant PUD stated it wants a more broad-based and comprehensive UCR genetic analysis, including the captive brood program. WDFW indicated that the reproductive study is doing the same thing for the Wenatchee Basin (sampling for adults at Tumwater Dam). Grant PUD indicated that it is expanding the study to other basins, including the Methow and Entiat, and will study both juveniles and adults. Grant PUD staff feels if they don't have definitive data, it will be difficult to convince stakeholders that the program is viable enough to construct the necessary facilities within the White River Basin.

NOAA Fisheries clarified that even with the additional data, there won't be enough of it to review the validity of the program, stating that NOAA is committed to the long-term adaptive approach to the White River stock. Grant PUD acknowledged that one year is likely not adequate to make decisions but it should be enough to initiate discussions about how it might impact the program.

Genetic samples were collected during '04 and '05 from Mike Ford's work. The sampling occurred when 100% of spring Chinook passing Tumwater were sampled and PIT-tagged. Data collected at Tumwater will help WDFW determine whether the fish is hatchery or wild. WDFW then identified the origin of fish on the spawning grounds through PIT-tag detection..

- c) **Weir** – The JFP suggests a collecting/sampling weir as opposed to an exclusion weir. The group proposed giving the following information to design engineers: where the site would be, what would be trapped, trapping timeframe, and the trap efficiency needed from a seasonally operated weir. Using these measures, the JFP believes engineers can design a weir with a more acceptable footprint. Grant PUD stated that while the footprint may be minimized, it would still require objectionable destruction to habitat, even though the proposed Sears Creek Bridge site has existing structures. USFS stated that regardless of when or how long the weir is operated, consider what bank alteration needs to occur to create an acceptable structure. If banks need to be altered by heavy machinery to bedrock, and permanent structures on both banks need to be constructed to make the sampling weir functional, then the resulting structures would likely affect the character of the proposed Wild Scenic and Recreational White River. At the Sears Creek Bridge where a sampling weir is currently being considered, the river is proposed Recreational. USFS stated that for a proposal for special-use permit to be accepted and granted, extensive NEPA analysis and likely a formal revision to the Wenatchee Land and Resource Management Plan would need to occur. To date, the USFS has not received a proposal for weir construction on Forest Service lands. USFS also mentioned that should a weir site be proposed and built on private lands in the White River basin, the USFS would still be required to consult on the weir on private land as it would be considered a connected action under NEPA during the analysis of the proposed acclimation facility on USFS lands. A letter from the USFS in response to the proposal for a acclimation site on USFS lands will likely come in the next two weeks. NOAA will discuss the issue internally and the subcommittee will discuss USFS' decision at its next meeting. NOAA asked if information on run timing can be obtained in the next year. Grant PUD said it would have to discuss the issue internally.

d) **Alternate release strategies**

NOAA indicated that while acclimation is first choice, there are examples of successful direct-stream releases for spring-run Chinook. Grant PUD would like to explore the idea of alternative release strategies and suggested using the BY05 F2s (90,000 projected) for direct release as an alternative. WDFW suggested they be PIT-tagged. Further discussion will occur among the JFP prior to the next PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee meeting. YN requested that Grant PUD provide a more detailed list of topics for discussion, particularly for items that need a decision.

BY2006-07 egg takes

a) **Remote-site incubators**

USFWS has proposed that the green eggs be transported from AquaSeed to Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery's Carson Depot Springs incubation facility. Five raceways are available. There are tables included in the distributed proposal that indicate ELISA criteria. There is the ability to segregate the fish once they are on site. Grant PUD stated it would take eight weeks to get a contract through (there would be no capital improvement, only O&M involved with use of the facility). USFWS indicated a decision will be made within a week. YN suggested NOAA Fisheries contact USFWS about the proposal. NOAA also indicated that the Bonneville facility may have room for the remainder of the program. NOAA will make contact concerning that facility. If approval from USFWS is obtained, the subcommittee is in agreement that Grant PUD will move forward with the plan to move the eggs. Grant PUD has also requested the transfer of 200,000 to 400,000 eggs to remote-site incubators in preparation for direct release. While the JFP indicated its preference for the pre-smolt/smolt acclimation, it agreed to consider RSIs as a last resort.

- b) **Up to 200,000 reared on unchilled water to marking size then reared in net pens for approximately four to six weeks** – JFP proposed to Grant PUD that if acclimation is found on the White River, the BY06 fish at AquaSeed will go there. If not, then what comes out of the Little White Salmon hatchery will be handled as a pre-smolt release in March with net-penning for 100,000 and direct-stream release for the other 100,000. Grant PUD indicated its continued concern as to how to handle the excess fish (over the 250,000 required by the BiOp). The subcommittee agreed that a contingency plan needs to be made in the event that there are 200,000 high-ELISA fish.
- c) **ELISA levels**
JFP requested a diagram of families and their ELISA levels from WDFW or AquaSeed for the JFP to make a more informed decision concerning selection for alternate rearing/release strategies.
- d) **Should the fact that BY2006 and BY2007 will be F3s be considered during selection of alternative rearing/release strategies?** NOAA suggested geneticists look at it before spawning protocol is decided on. Grant PUD's concern is that these fish are offspring from families that have been in captivity for two full generations. WDFW stated there should be a contingency plan concerning identification of the highest priority juveniles from the BY2006 for spawning.

Public Relations Strategy – Grant PUD has indicated its desire to participate in the Mid-Columbia Forum on March 28-29. Informational brochures will be printed soon. Grant PUD stressed that any information needs to be delivered by the subcommittee as a whole. Rohr suggested a conference call to discuss PR.

Next Meeting: March 16, 2006, SeaTac, 10:00 am
Discussion of May combined meeting.