

PUBLIC MEETING

PRCC HATCHERY SUBCOMMITTEE

Wednesday, August 15, 2007

6:30 – 8:30 pm

Lake Wenatchee Recreation Center

14400 Chiwawa Loop Rd.

Leavenworth

Committee Member/Agency Representative Attendees:

Tom Scribner, Yakama Nation

Dave Carie, USFWS

Kirk Truscott, WDFW

Russell Langshaw, Grant PUD

Jerry Marco, CCT

Denny Rohr, Facilitator

Lynn Hatcher, NFMS

Greg Ferguson, Consultant

Julie Yount, Grant PUD

FINAL Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome and Introductions - Denny Rohr, PRCC Facilitator

Rohr introduced Chelan County Commissioner Ron Walter and Grant County PUD Commissioners Terry Brewer and Bob Bernd, and thanked them for their attendance. He then introduced the committee members in attendance. He welcomed Lynn Hatcher of the National Marine Fisheries Service, joining the PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee tonight for the first time. He introduced the members of the subcommittee present this evening.

II. Opening Comments and Agenda Review - Denny Rohr

Rohr gave a brief review of the evening's agenda.

Question: Is the panel seated at the front of the room all in agreement with the program to be discussed tonight.

Answer: Langshaw stated that the committee is committed to supplementation in the White River and Nason Creek and is working together with the public to work out details as the program moves forward.

III. Hatchery Subcommittee Working Group Update - Denny Rohr

Rohr discussed briefly the working group which has been meeting the last two months. He indicated the public participants have included John Soest, NW Audubon; Tom Clark, public advocate; Dick Rieman, Ramon VandenBrulle, and Nick Gayesky, Wild Fish Conservancy; Peter Hill, Trust for Public Land; Steve Gerard, Resident; Bob Bugert, CDLT; Matt Karrer, USFS. He indicated their input has been helpful and the Working Group has had a direct impact on modifications to site planning. Rohr invited attendees to participate going forward, as the Working Group will continue to meet in conjunction with monthly Hatchery SC meetings. The meetings are being held in Leavenworth.

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IV. White River and Nason Creek HGMPs - Russell Langshaw, Grant PUD; Greg Ferguson, Sea Springs, Inc.

Rohr introduced Greg Ferguson, consultant and Russell Langshaw of Grant PUD. Ferguson began with a review of the intent and purpose of the HGMPs and why the committee is going through all this effort. Draft HGMPs for the White River and Nason Creek programs were released for public comment in July. Two sets of comments were received, one from the Wild Fish Conservancy and one from Chelan PUD. They have not been reviewed yet in depth, but the committee has begun this review.

Ferguson indicated one specific concern has to do with the impacts to wild fish. Another is on Monitoring & Evaluation programs.

Question: (M. Soest) Can additional concerns still be added? What is the impact to Lake Wenatchee? This concern was not listed on the PowerPoint tonight.

Answer: Ferguson stated additional opportunity for public comment on the HGMPs will occur once submitted to NOAA Fisheries. However, any input is welcome at any time. Rohr stated the list presented tonight was specific to the written comments received on the drafts. Impact to the lake will certainly be considered. Ferguson stated the updated and revised drafts are intended to be submitted to NOAA Fisheries in November. Impact to the environment will be carefully considered when reviewed by NOAA.

Further, NEPA and SEPA (National and State Environmental Protection Acts) review will then be initiated following review of the HGMPs.

V. Facilities Planning - Russell Langshaw; Greg Ferguson

A list of necessary or potential permits was reviewed, including water rights, Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA), Joint Aquatic Resource Permit (JARPA), SEPA, NEPA, etc. Completion dates will vary greatly depending upon the HGMP review.

Components of facility planning were reviewed including: brood capture, adult holding and incubation, rearing, overwinter sites, final acclimation and release. A map of the Wenatchee Basin was shown as background.

A. White River

A slide showing the Lower White River site was shown. Ferguson indicated the components of the general site plan. The draft site plan was shown, and Ferguson stated that significant changes to the site plan have been made due directly from input by the Working Group. Some changes involve the use of a submersible pump, shorter fencing around the acclimation ponds with natural vegetation around the fencing, and material to be used for the acclimation ponds.

Question: (Gray) What consideration to the flood plain has been made? The 100-year flood plain has been reached multiple times during his lifetime. He indicated the floods have reached the deck of the Sears Creek Bridge.

Answer: Langshaw stated that consideration to the flooding has been made, and the committee is working through how flooding will affect the program. If flooding in the spring occurs, the fish would enter the river as they would naturally, just earlier than planned.

Comment: Electrical boxes for the facility pump station would need to be above flood levels.

Response: Ferguson stated that waterproof equipment is being considered.

Comment: Gray indicated he runs an electrical company in the area and the controls will flood.

Question: It appears that significant investment will be made to infrastructure of the site. What is being considered for the natural meandering and erosion effects.

Answer: Ferguson stated that shoreline stabilization is a key goal for this site, as well as returning the majority of the property to more closely fit its natural state.

Additional vegetation will be added to the shoreline and likely additional riprap.

Question: What are the other options being considered for bank stabilization besides vegetation?

Answer: Ferguson stated there are several options being considered. Riprap (mid- to large-sized rock) is one option, engineered logs and root wads, etc.

Ferguson also stated that culverts are being considered to reduce the pinch in the river.

Comment: Modifications to the bridge adjacent to the site would also ease this pinched flow at the location.

Scribner asked to clarify what specifically is intended in the current plan to restore habitat and create armor of the site from further erosion.

Ferguson stated he wanted to clarify this lot is in the flood plain, but not the floodway.

Comment: November of 1995 the roadway was washed out adjacent to this site.

Comment: Much of the land in the area consists of sand. Silt buildup should be a concern that is considered.

Comment/Question: Bugert commended the group on creating a compromise and attempting to consider local interests with such a difficult program. He stated, however, that with each compromise, the efficacy of the program lessens. Is there a point that the program becomes not feasible, due to the compromises having been made? Are there other options being considered for spring Chinook to avoid the substantial costs of an ineffective program?

Answer: Langshaw stated the committee feels the compromises are reasonable and this program is continuing to move forward because the committee is responsible for implementing policy decisions that are made above this committee.

Question: Bugert asked who could be contacted at a policy level to have an effect on this plan.

Answer: Rohr stated the committee has been working according to the policy decisions above them, and he would be happy to facilitate contact with policy makers above this committee to facilitate a meeting of this sort.

Request: Bugert stated as a representative of one of the largest land trusts, he would formally request such a policy meeting with the Grant PUD Commissioners.

Answer: Rohr indicated he would request the committee discuss how such a policy meeting could be formulated and how it should be directed.

Question: How was a decision to be made forming a dam at the lower end of the lake?

Comment: Kaputa stated that it has been unclear that the meetings to date have involved the policy level representatives and committee members, so if this committee does not represent their agencies, we need to correct this now.

Answer: Rohr indicated he has had discussions with Rob Walton, Asst. Regional Director of NMFS. Walton invited contact to discuss such policy decisions.

Comment/Request: (Walter) Grant PUD should have made contact with the Watershed Planning Committee which has been very involved in planning for the area. There continues to be a great disconnect between the mitigation plans with Grant PUD and the Watershed Plan, and the participation by agencies that are a part of the Hatchery SC. He would request indicating what the specific mitigation needs are, then allow the watershed planning group to assist in seeing what options would then fit into the Watershed Plan.

Response: Rohr requested that if a policy meeting was put together, he would request that a list of questions be prepared in advance of this meeting. He asked if Walter, Bugert and others would be willing to participate in this planning.

Response: Truscott commented that right now the committee is going through a process of feasibility assessment of this plan. He stated that the committee is aware that the site discussed has drawbacks, and if the decision is reached that the problems cannot be worked out, the site does have habitat qualities. Truscott wanted to also stress that this particular program is not the full recovery plan, only a portion of it.

Response: Lynn Hatcher of NOAA Fisheries asked to clarify that this committee is doing a very specific technical task and are following direction of policy makers and decisions in settlement agreements already in place. A Biological Opinion is very serious to NOAA Fisheries, and Grant PUD is doing a great job in fulfilling the requirements set forth. If policy decisions are to be affected at this juncture, it is a very good time to do such decision making, while a new Biological Opinion is being constructed.

Question: What is the timing of the new Biological Opinion?

Answer: Hatcher anticipated in September or October.

Request: Rohr requested volunteers to assist in putting together policy group questions.

Comment: Gray stated a policy level group meeting should involve the major landowners in the area to include at least CDLT, Gray Family (Charlotte Gray), Helen Lausten, and Chelan County.

Question: Sally Soest asked if the policy group would then address whether or not supplementation was a viable option?

Comment: Bugert stated he would like to revisit scientific review. In the mid 90's there was considerable controversy regarding a fisheries program. Interested parties still believe that Scientific Review is appropriate for this program, with a risk analysis for all aspects that would be affected (sockeye and other environmental concerns). The Land Trust will pursue this review at a congressional level if this is necessary.

Response: Rohr indicated that he had contact with Lars Mobernd who indicated the HSRG would not be in the area until December or January. He was advised today, however, that the HSRG may be in the area as early as next month.

Response: Rohr stated he would talk with Bugert further regarding a policy level meeting.

Back to Facilities Planning Discussion:

Ferguson stated that upstream acclimation has been discussed in great detail, and a decision may be made to not having to do upstream acclimation. Discussion is being held on testing lower release sites with a lower number of fish, and finding an alternative to net pens release.

Question: (M. Soest) Can't testing be done on another river?

Answer: Langshaw stated that we currently have White River fish which need to be returned to their river of origin. These are listed species and must be handled appropriately. In addition, results in other areas have been obtained and vary widely. Information on this specific location is needed.

Question: Is the issue of larger hatchery fish size feeding on wild fry being considered?

Answer: Truscott stated the fish being released are smolt-size and not large enough to have an impact on natural fry.

Comment: (Kaputa) Are there permits in place to do releases now?

Answer: Davidson (Grant PUD) indicated a Section 10 permit was obtained which covered the net pen releases.

Comment: One concern was also the waste associated with net pen use.

Comment: A slimy rock was presented at the first public meeting, but no one has provided results of testing.

Answer: Dresser (Grant PUD) stated that he recalled it was given to Pat Irle at Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE). He can follow up and determine if testing was done.

Davidson stated that Chelan PUD is currently working with WDOE on regulations to address waste issues and standards.

Comment: (Jerry) Have other sites been evaluated via aerial surveys and such, rather than this particular location?

Answer: Langshaw stated yes, this has occurred, and this site was chosen because of surface water intake capability. This site allows for limited impact, it is also highly impacted already.

Question: Would the group be amenable to someone donating property for this use?

Answer: Langshaw stated there are many variables which would need to be addressed in order to choose a site. If the property met certain criteria, it would certainly be considered.

Comment: Still need to address the question of legality of placing predators into the river.

Answer: Clarification was made that the smaller-sized smolt size being placed into the area are not large enough to prey on the natural fry.

Question: What will be the result of flooding and avulsion?

Answer: Ferguson stated that if there is a major stream channel change, the site may not be viable after such change occurs.

Question to the Attendees: Scribner asked the attendees if they would be okay with the long-term result of having no salmon left in the White River, or very few. Would they be okay with this result if no supplementation was to occur?

Attendee Response: The attendees wanted to clarify which species, or if specific to spring Chinook. The group agreed that collectively restoring natural species is desired. Other factors would need to be controlled far downstream of the area.

Response: Scribner stated the committee understands this program is only a part of recovery.

Question: Isn't the White River a good reference stream as it is now?

Response: Langshaw indicated this is currently being evaluated, and it has been found that the White River fish have not been responding the same as fish in other rivers.

Comment: As far as habitat concerns, the White River is in very good condition, and introducing hatchery fish would result in losing the control condition.

Response: Langshaw stated that based on the techniques used to assess reference streams at this point, the White River would not be suitable to use as a reference stream.

Comment: Soest stated that he wished to address concerns previously stated by the WFC folks and Dick Whitney. He indicates that 60-70 years ago, the White River Chinook were not native to that river.

Question: Does Grant PUD pay for all of these programs?

Response: Langshaw indicated Grant PUD does not pay for other agency involvement, time and committee involvement, but does pay for facilities, consulting, and actual implementation.

Question: Is there a deadline to get this program implemented?

Response: Dresser indicated the next step is the issuance of a Biological Opinion to be issued by NOAA Fisheries, pending later this fall. Then this Biological Opinion will be incorporated into a new operating license to be issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), expected in 2008. Typically within a new license, FERC will set some deadlines for implementation. With a program of this nature, a good deal of planning will be involved and stakeholder involvement obtained, so extensions may be necessary.

Langshaw carried on with facilities planning, in the interest of time hitting some highlights:

- Originally the committee was looking at a weir site. Now looking at other options to minimize impacts for brood capture.
- Adult holding and incubation is being considered on Nason Creek, options on Wenatchee River, Gloyd Springs, and other options involve using space at existing facilities.
- Rearing was addressed. Rearing is currently occurring at Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery.
- Over-winter acclimation at the Lower White River site is currently the most viable option.
- Final acclimation and release in upstream locations, temporary low impact proposals are being put together at various upstream locations.

Question: On release sites for over-wintering, will snow removal be necessary?
(Specifically at the Sears Creek site.)

Response: Langshaw indicated options are being considered to include factoring in snow levels and limited access but snow removal may be required at the site that is developed.

B. Nason Creek

Langshaw briefly explained a map of the Nason Creek area and the major spawning area. Langshaw indicated Grant PUD owns a parcel at Cascade Gardens which is just downstream of the public rest area. There are some issues with ground water at this site, so other options are still being looked into.

A floating weir being considered for brood collection. Tumwater stock ID is also an option.

Adult holding and incubation options include the Cascade Gardens site, the Wenatchee River and Gloyd Springs Hatchery.

Rearing is being considered at Cascade Gardens or a new site which has been offered by the current owner (still being investigated), or other existing hatcheries.

C. Facilities Planning Next steps:

Langshaw stated the committee plans to continue to meet with the Working Group to review site plans and discuss alternatives. Rohr indicated a Working Group meeting will be held tomorrow at the Howard Johnson Motel in Leavenworth at 2:00 pm.

Langshaw indicated permit applications for water rights are in the process of being obtained and some water evaluations are ongoing, wetland delineation reviews are being done, cultural reviews are occurring, and other sites are still being evaluated.

VI. Updates Current Activities in White River and Nason Creek Basins - Russell Langshaw

- Rotary screw traps continue to operate.
- Spawning surveys and egg collection will be occurring by WDFW staff.
- Property evaluations are ongoing.
- Water research/evaluation activities are planned.
- A new launch site may be researched for the net pen installation.

Question: Is the reference stream report available for review?

Answer: Langshaw indicated the report is not yet complete and is in draft format now. Truscott stated work continues and once complete, it will be released for public and also peer review.

VII. Questions, Comments

Question: Will a policy change have an effect now, at this stage?

Answer: Langshaw indicated that if there is a major policy shift, then the committee will be obligated to follow the new direction. Current actions are following the interim Biological Opinion and will continue until other instructions are given.

Hatcher indicated the interim BiOp was established based on the best science at that time.

Comment: Bugert reinforced that this program was set into place based on the best science at the time and the committee is following that direction, which was in place prior to watershed planning and other programs.

VIII. Next Public Meeting

Rohr asked if there was a concern with postponing the next public meeting until after the HGMPs are submitted to NMFS in November.

Comment: Joe Miller stated, at a minimum, the policy meeting should be held prior to having another public meeting. Other attendees stressed the desire to hold such a policy meeting prior to the issuance of the new Biological Opinion.

Response: Rohr indicated he will proceed with such planning discussions, and will not schedule another public meeting until a later date.

IX. Adjourn 8:53 pm