

PUBLIC MEETING

PRCC HATCHERY SUBCOMMITTEE

Thursday, May 17, 2007
6:30 – 8:55 PM
Lake Wenatchee Recreational Center
14400 Chiwawa Loop Rd.

FINAL MEETING MINUTES

PRCC Hatchery SubCommittee Members

Kris Petersen, NMFS
Tom Scribner, YN
Dave Carie, USFWS
Denny Rohr, Facilitator

Jerry Marco, CCT
Kirk Truscott, WDFW
Russell Langshaw, GPUD

- I. **Welcome and Introductions** - Denny Rohr, PRCC Facilitator
Rohr welcomed attendees and introduced PRCC Hatchery Committee members. He also introduced Ron Walter, Chelan County Commissioner. Rohr reminded attendees to please sign in to ensure an accurate list of interested parties is maintained.

- II. **Meeting Objectives** - Denny Rohr outlined the primary objective of the evening's meeting to be:
 - A. Public Involvement and Workgroup Development
 - B. Answers to Previous Questions
 - C. White River/Nason Creek HGMP Overview/Development

- III. **Public Involvement Discussion** – Denny Rohr
Rohr advised that the committee would like to start a working group to encourage additional public involvement. He proposed that those who would like to participate would be encouraged to attend monthly Hatchery subcommittee (HSC) meetings, typically held the third Thursday of each month. A portion of the meeting time would be set aside specifically for this working group to offer input, participate in discussions and offer suggestions to the HSC. Sign-up sheets will be distributed for those interested in signing up.
Rohr also addressed how the committee could best communicate with interested parties. The committee currently is looking to hold another public meeting the third week of July. Rohr asked the opinion of attendees if that schedule was acceptable, or if another option was preferred. Ron Walters, attendee, requested the question be asked again at the end of the meeting to get a better idea of the response.

IV. **Answers to Previous Questions** – Kris Petersen, NMFS

Petersen advised she would address several questions presented to NMFS over the past several months.

Scientific Review Questions: As a follow-up to the request for scientific review of the White River Spring Chinook Supplementation program asked of Rob Walton, NMFS Assistant Regional Administrator at the August public meeting, a meeting was held on November 30, 2006 to address this question. An informal report was prepared following that meeting. This material was provided to all attendees at the door. In addition, a letter from Rob Walton was distributed expressing his opinion that he does not see a need for additional scientific review, that additional review at this time is not likely to resolve the uncertainty of the program.

Petersen called attention to another handout which addresses the Columbia River Basin Hatchery Reform Project and its origins. The Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) is a part of this program, which has been used extensively in the Puget Sound and has recently been recommended for the Columbia River Basin and tributaries. This handout lists the members of the HSRG and gives general information. Petersen expressed that more information is available on the website.

Also included with the information provided was a handout which addresses the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) and Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB) and explains how these groups were developed to review projects for the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NWPPCC) and not appropriate for the situation with the White River/Nason Creek programs.

Comment – Gordon Congdon wished to make some points. One was to clarify that the meeting held on November 30 conflicted with another meeting scheduled several months prior. Better coordination could have been accomplished to work around schedules. He conceded that the ISRP or ISAB may not be appropriate, but there may be another group that could do a similar review. Congdon asked why there is a need to rush ahead before the HSRG has had a chance to review the program.

Response - Petersen advised she was unaware of the meeting conflict and appreciated being advised at this time.

Comment - Ron Walter wished to clarify that he was only able to attend a small portion of the meeting (20 minutes) and to state in the summary that he and another Commissioner had participated was not accurate.

Comment - (Tim) Shared a great concern that a member of the committee at a previous public meeting denied knowledge of the release of 500 tagged fish in Nason Creek resulting in only three fish which made it through the lake. He indicated a Yakama Nation representative denied this event, but he spoke to another representative who confirmed it did occur and that she did know. He expressed concern with dolly varden populations feeding on the planted fish and that no consideration about predators, or denial of this knowledge, is a serious problem.

Response – Petersen indicated she was not aware of the situation to which he referred.

Response – Scribner, Yakama Nation, responded that he must be referring to Keely Murdoch of Yakama Nation. He stated it was not in Ms. Murdoch's nature to be dishonest, and there must have been some confusion about the question at the last

meeting, or the program to which he referred. Scribner stated he must be referring to the release of coho in Nason Creek, a program Yakama Nation has been involved with directly.

Comment - (Ramone) Expressed he is not convinced that the ISAB would not be appropriate for the programs in question. He stated it is worth noting that both the ISAB and ISRP have classically been more critical than the HSRG on projects such as this.

Comment – (Ron Walters) Rob Walton’s letter states he made a decision during the November 30 that he did not believe ISAB and ISRP were appropriate. Is this May 14 letter the first time this opinion was stated?

Response - Petersen responded no, this was announced at the meeting and also in the summary provided following the meeting.

Comment – (Kaputa) The ISRP is ready and willing to do the review, but it would need to be specifically requested by the project proponent, Grant PUD, and NOAA Fisheries would need to endorse it. Because this project is becoming so controversial, the NWPCC would need to approve as well. Kaputa expressed it is unfortunate that we are still in the same spot as we were nine months ago.

Response - Petersen clarified this was not her decision, she is only passing on Walton’s response.

Petersen then went on to cover a list of eight specific questions presented to NOAA Fisheries staff (shown numbered and in bold).

1. What was the decision process to arrive at the White River and Nason Creek recovery programs?

(Petersen) The spring Chinook program began in approximately 1996 by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). NOAA Fisheries agreed at that time to move forward with a captive brood program. In 1996 and 1997 captive brood programs were started in Nason Creek, White River and Twisp. Benefits were noted in Nason Creek to the extent that the focus shifted to a supplementation program. White River is limited by the small number of adults returning. It would be risky to take all the returning adults for a supplementation program at this point. The captive brood program minimizes the risk to returning adults. In 1998 the WDFW applied for a Section 10 permit to continue the Nason Creek and White River programs. NMFS did not act on the permit due to the uncertainty of funding at the time.

Question – What are the legal ramifications in not completing a Section 10 permit for WDFW work.

Response - Petersen stated that WDFW continued to work with NOAA Fisheries throughout the process while the permitting consultations continued.

Question – At the same time the White River program was in process, the Nason Creek program was eventually phased out. Why?

Response - Langshaw indicated the Nason Creek program had two releases that were made in 2004 and 2005 from acclimation sites.

Question – Brood collection is low impact, but the goal is to release fish that will return to the White River and spawn with naturally occurring stock. Is there is a risk in the effect to the genetic structure?

Response - Petersen responded that because the number of returning adults is so low, it is worth the risk at this time.

2. Why is Grant PUD in Chelan County constructing facilities?

(Petersen) Grant PUD hydro projects kill fish from upriver watersheds. There is just a certain amount of mortality that is unavoidable. Grant PUD is required to mitigate for the loss of fish, and Upper Columbia spring Chinook are among those fish affected by the Priest Rapids Project.

3. Are the White River and Nason Creek spring Chinook truly unique?

(Petersen) There have been several genetic analyses run, and although the genetic uniqueness is not great, there are other unique characteristics to these specific fish. One is the need to cross a lake to spawn. Local adaptation will be encouraged and is in accordance with the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Plan and the Wenatchee Watershed Management Plan.

The argument has been posed that these fish were all mixed up in the 40's so why keep them separated now. Petersen stressed the need to not follow past mistakes.

4. Are the holding pens in Lake Wenatchee contributing to the water quality problems in the lake?

To Petersen's knowledge, the net pens contribute very little to the water quality issues in the lake. The fish are held there for only a few months. Low phosphorous food was used and will continue to be used. Some nutrients result from the holding pens, but this is all handled under consultation with the Department of Ecology.

Question – Was there water quality testing done in the area of the net pens, as required by Ecology?

Response – Truscott (WDFW) responded he was not aware if WQ monitoring was done at the Lake Wenatchee net pens, that it was not a stipulation in this year's operation. Grant PUD, Ecology and WDFW will be meeting to establish water quality monitoring requirements going forward.

Question – Is there a provision regarding what will be done if the WQ is not within acceptable standards?

Response – Truscott stated he is not aware that there currently is a provision, but there is the potential that it could be included following next month's meeting. There continue to be processes that will be developed as the program moves forward.

Response – Tom Dresser, Grant PUD Fish, Wildlife and Water Quality Manager advised that Grant PUD did consult with Ecology prior to net pen use. The data collected by Chelan PUD following use of the pens with their sockeye program with much greater numbers showed little risk of a WQ issue. Dresser stated he would double check this information and follow up with the group.

Comment – Chelan County requested that Grant PUD provide data on what kind of phosphorous contributions could be associated with the program.

Response - Petersen agreed to provide this information.

5. Is the original White River hatchery site still under consideration, and if so, how will it be planned for mitigation of flooding, etc?

(Petersen) No specific decision has been made on any site location and this is why this meeting is so important. A site that is biologically viable while maintaining the natural habitat is key.

6. Specifically what is required of the public?

(Petersen) Nothing is required specifically, but the participation is certainly requested.

7. What is the long-term goal of the program?

(Petersen) The goal is to achieve a returning population of healthy spring Chinook and provide a demographic boost to create a self-sustaining population.

Question – Is there a shorter term goal and a target sunset date that the program become no longer necessary?

Response – At this time there is no target sunset date. Ideally there would be the goal of having healthy, self-sustaining returns in order to make the program no longer necessary.

8. Have predation concerns been factored into the mortality calculations and the decision-making process?

(Petersen) No specific data has been collected on predation, but it is always a consideration.

Question – (Tim) Shouldn't this be considered closely before this program moves forward? Tim stated he had a friend who caught a dolly varden and was planning to eat it. He told the friend to cut it open and see if it had been eating the salmon. He stated they did, and there were several fish in its stomach. He expressed great concern that the dolly varden are simply feeding on the Chinook.

Response – Petersen stated there are considerations for both listed species and that impacts to each are being considered.

Comment – Tom Clark introduced himself as a public advocate. Tom stated consideration should be given to the goals of the program, that returning the fish to the river is important to all. He pointed out that worrying about a short term net pen project is foolish compared to accepting that a loss of the returning salmon could be eminent. He encouraged making an effort to improve the habitat for the returning salmon and everyone will be rewarded for it.

Comment – John Soest pointed out that many people could not attend tonight due to a Leavenworth Salmon Festival planning meeting. He stressed coordination with local groups would be appreciated. He stated the recount of the history was good, but important questions remain. He further pointed out the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust (CDLT), Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board and the Wenatchee River Watershed Planning group should have been advised from the outset of the program. He asked when each of the groups first heard about this program. Attendees indicated perhaps only 2

years ago they became aware of the program. He stated it was unfortunate there were several programs being developed at the same time without the opportunity for coordination.

Soest further pointed out the article in the Leavenworth Echo printed yesterday and quoted the article that a permanent structure would be included.

Comment – Ron Walters stated many have not decided if they are for or against the program. He would encourage independent review of the program to ease the skepticism for those still undecided. There is also concern that it is being forced upon the residents. There remains the impression that Grant PUD is only doing this so that they can check it off as their license requirement, like it or not. There is a need to ensure interested parties that it will not be forced.

Comment – Tom Clark reminded attendees that they demand the power from the hydropower projects and that in turn, all are responsible for killing the fish affected by the hydro projects.

V. Draft HGMPs and Facilities Planning -

Petersen introduced Greg Ferguson and explained his role as a consultant working for Grant PUD at the recommendation of the HSC. Petersen also pointed out another handout presented at the door which gives an outline of the HGMP template and its general purpose. The HGMP outline indicates, by blue color, all sections of the HGMP which are open to public comment. Petersen stressed that the HGMPs are not yet completed and public involvement is encouraged at this point before the drafts are complete.

PowerPoint Presentation on HGMPs for the White River and Nason Creek programs presented by Greg Ferguson, Sea Springs, Inc.

Ferguson began with a brief overview of the content of the presentation. He indicated he would cover HGMP's in general, facilities siting and design objectives, alternatives for both White River and Nason Creek, and next steps in the facilities planning process.

HGMP Development - It is the intent to utilize existing documents, scientific literature and the PRCC HSC. He then stressed the important role of the public and the input residents and interested parties can and should share.

Draft Project Schedule – a condensed version was presented from 1998 through 2018. Ferguson indicated that though the schedule was difficult to read as an overhead slide, it outlined important information on processes that include public involvement and scientific review. The draft schedule also listed tasks which include no scientific review or public involvement. This was questioned, and he explained that these tasks are operations, not requiring these reviews.

Facilities Planning components – Ferguson stated that the HSC is attempting to combine as many of the components necessary for the program into the fewest number of sites. No sites have yet been selected as of this time.

Question – (Ramon, Wild Fish Conservancy) Regarding the supplementation program and minimizing the risk to wild stocks, are there going to be targets for survival and performance standards and indicators for threshold standards? Are these being addressed?

Response - Ferguson indicates supplementation has not been studied extensively because there is no long-term program which has been established for long enough to evaluate.

Comment – (Ramon) There appears to be a demographic risk with supplementation. You will need a very high egg to smolt survival to cover for very low smolt to adult survival, indicating there is a risk that this will require endless human intervention to raise the eggs to continue having a viable program. To remove that cushion threatens the long-term fitness of the program.

Response - Ferguson stated he realizes there are continued questions regarding the supplementation program, but there is a definite risk with inbreeding and mixing small populations.

Response - Truscott indicated it is important to remember that this is only a component to recovery, not the final solution. More data is still being gathered and WDFW is working closely with NOAA Fisheries to evaluate programs and hatchery vs. wild populations. Certainly there is a risk when mixing hatchery spawners with natural fish, but there is a greater risk with doing nothing.

Comment – Request that the PowerPoint be posted on a website so it can be evaluated more closely.

Response - Langshaw stated it would be posted on the Grant PUD website tomorrow.

Comment – (Ramon) Stated he is aware of mitigation requirements of Grant PUD, but there seems opportunity for PUDs to provide mitigation by participating in evaluation of the supplementation process, rather than just starting a supplementation program without being sure of the benefits.

Response - Scribner stated Chelan PUD's M&E is based on reference streams, which addresses this concern. We are still developing the one for Grant PUD.

Comment – It has been helpful to receive this information today to know this is in process.

Ferguson continued the PowerPoint presentation covering objectives overall, siting and design objectives, and rearing and acclimation objectives.

He addressed the need for adequate water supplies to obtain the listed objectives, to increase survival and homing fidelity.

White River Program - A visual was presented showing the main spawning reach of the White River. Ferguson then presented brood capture options, brood holding and rearing options specific to the White River.

A draft site plan for the Lower White (McComas) site was presented for conceptual overwinter acclimation options, but Ferguson stressed this is simply a proposal and has not been determined to be a certain site. Orientation to the location of the site was clarified. Benefits to the site were explained, regarding the fact it is already highly impacted, it has good surface water collection possibilities.

He then covered options that are being considered, including blocking side channels for acclimation as well as building natural ponds.

Nason Creek Program - A visual of the Nason Creek Basin was shown, indicating the main spawning reach, a proposed weir site, and two other sites being evaluated (Cascade Gardens and RM 11). Ferguson discussed a conceptual site plan for the Cascade Gardens

site. He pointed out that water availability is still being evaluated. He and Langshaw discussed the proposed foot path to address accessibility if the Day Street access was vacated.

Question – It appears that the Nason Creek was proposed with much less concern for aesthetics. Why is that?

Response - Langshaw stated this particular location is already highly impacted, it is right next to Hwy 2, it already contains structures that would be removed, and it is very near the rest area. Aesthetics are still very important, but there is a greater opportunity at this site to include additional components.

Comment – Dave Klinger introduced himself and stated he is involved in the watershed planning. He stated the desire to keep the White River pristine and not ruin all previous efforts to protect the area.

Comment – The last newsletter indicated that cultural and site surveys were complete and that results of water evaluation would be pending. Was this information received?

Response - Langshaw stated one well was tested and results were less than desired. There are currently plans to deepen the second well to reevaluate water availability later this summer.

Ferguson completed the PowerPoint presentation with a summary of “Next Steps” in the facilities planning process and another invitation for those interested in providing input to become involved as the HGMP process moves forward.

VI. Updates: Current Activities in White River and Nason Creek – Russell Langshaw, Grant PUD

Langshaw indicated property searches continue. Site surveys may take place for cultural, biological and land conditions. Water availability will need to be assessed so there is the potential for well drilling and/or surface intake evaluations.

Supplementation programs currently have WDFW netting fry, and egg collection will take place next fall.

About 140,000 subyearlings were released into the river this spring. Approximately 70,000 yearlings were released from the net pens.

Rotary screw traps are in operation on both the White River and Nason Creek to evaluate migration, juvenile production and life history information.

Langshaw presented a short video clip of the subyearlings released into the White River.

VII. Questions, Comments, Summary – Denny Rohr

Rohr indicated he had two items to address:

He presented information on the potential formation of a working group earlier in the meeting. At this time, Rohr requested a show of hands for those inclined to participate. He asked all attendees to please complete a sign-up sheet which were then distributed to all attendees.

Regarding evening meetings, it had been suggested that another evening meeting be held July 19, 2007. Rohr requested thoughts on if this is too soon or not soon

enough. The timing would allow for an opportunity to discuss the draft HGMPs at that time. No opposition to this date was voiced.

Question – What other things is Grant PUD doing to provide mitigation other than the supplementation program?

Response - Langshaw indicated there are numerous programs ongoing at the Priest Rapids Project including passage improvement projects, habitat funding, and several others. He pointed out there are 40 reasonable and prudent alternative actions within the biological opinion, of which, supplementation is a small part.

Question – There was discussion earlier regarding water use from test wells. How much water would be used and where would it be deposited?

Response - Langshaw stated it could be up to 2 cfs and would be pumped into the river.

Comment – Ron Walter thanked the HSC for holding the meeting. He stated the meetings seem to be getting more productive. He appreciates the interaction and the fact that the program has slowed down to evaluate input. He addressed coordination with the local recovery plans and the importance of interaction.

Walter would still encourage ISRP review and stressed that it would only validate the programs in the public eye. He requested reconsideration. He expressed thanks for the efforts to meet.

Response - Petersen thanked Ron and the rest of the attendees. She stated that when asked about the working group, it was apparent that parties that are already engaged through other interests and organizations were the ones expressing interest in working group participation. She stressed the importance of having landowners and residents participate and engage as well.

Question – Addresses and emails were provided at sign-in. Will minutes be provided to all attendants?

Response - Rohr stated this would occur.

VIII. Adjourn 8:55 PM