

# FINAL MINUTES

## PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee White River/Nason Creek Supplementation Program Working Group

Thursday, June 21, 2007

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Krystal's Restaurant

Leavenworth, WA

### PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee Members

Kris Petersen, NMFS

Jerry Marco, CCT

Tom Scribner, Keely Murdoch, YN

Kirk Truscott, WDFW

Dave Carie, USFWS

Russell Langshaw, GCPUD

Carl Merkle, CTUIR

Denny Rohr, Facilitator

### **Attendees:**

\*Russell Langshaw, Grant PUD

\*Kris Petersen, NMFS (via conf. call)

Rob Walton, NMFS (via conf call)

\*Kirk Truscott, WDFW

\*Dave Carie, USFWS

\*Keely Murdoch, YN

Greg Ferguson, Consultant

Denny Rohr, Facilitator

Julie Yount, Grant PUD

Ben Lenz, Grant PUD

Nick Gayeski, Wild Fish Conservancy

Ramon VandenBrulle, Wild Fish Conservancy

Bob Bugert, Chelan Douglas Land Trust

Matt Karrer, USFS

Tom Clark, Advocate

Jon Soest, NW Audubon

Steve Girard, Resident

Peter Hill, Trust for Public Land

### **Distributed items:**

- McComas site conceptual design site plan distributed.

### **Decision Summary:**

- Working Group agreed to delay the next public meeting to Wednesday, August 15, 2007, following the 30-day public comment period on the White River and Nason Creek program HGMPs.

### **Action Items:**

- Notification to the contact list that there will be no public meeting in July. (Action-Julie/Denny)
- Lenz questioned if there should be a working group involving Habitat members to assist with the habitat considerations (Wenatchee Watershed Committee and CDLT should be engaged). Truscott agreed.

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Rohr introduced the Hatchery Committee members in attendance (and by phone, Kris Petersen and Rob Walton, NMFS), the additional Grant PUD staff, and Greg Ferguson, consultant assisting in the writing of the HGMPs. Working Group attendees introduced themselves to the committee and provided contact information.

## **II. Agenda Review**

Rohr briefly reviewed the agenda.

## **III. Background and Current Status**

Rohr reviewed the purpose of the meeting, stating the Working Group is being asked to provide assistance in the implementation of the White River and Nason Creek Supplementation Programs, including assistance in locating potential rearing and acclimation sites, input into acclimation and release facilities design, and other input that may be identified during working group meetings and discussions.

## **IV. HGMP Review**

### **A. Background, Status and Schedule**

The schedule for release of Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans (HGMPs) for White River and Nason Creek is planned for July 2 with a comment period deadline of August 3rd. Initially, holding a public meeting “mid-comment period (July 19)” was proposed and discussed at the May 17<sup>th</sup> public meeting. Rohr questioned the Working Group if it would be preferable to hold the public meeting following receipt and incorporation of comments. Attendees indicated agreement to wait until comments are processed would be preferable. Ferguson confirmed that another opportunity would be given to comment once the documents are closer to finalization, during the NEPA process. All agreed that holding the public meeting one month later would be preferred.

Wednesday evening, August 15, 6:30 – 8:30 pm at the Lake Wenatchee Recreation Center was chosen for the next public meeting. Rohr indicated notification will be sent to the current contact list along with notice there will be no public meeting in July.

### **B. Facilities Concepts and Facilities Siting**

Langshaw stated that evaluation of sites is ongoing. The group will have some conceptual drawings to look at today, and Langshaw stated he would also like to discuss some potential acclimation sites.

The McComas site conceptual design site plan was distributed. Langshaw reviewed the basic features of the site. Langshaw indicated this particular site was identified because it is already highly impacted, it has very good water intake potential, and it's proximity to the road is beneficial.

Girard questioned if there is a concern because the site is downstream of the spawning location. Ferguson stated the committee had a scientist present data this morning on homing fidelity. Murdoch indicated the Chiwawa program has fish spawning above their acclimation site, but lower than the wild fish. This property is at about river mile 1 and the spawning reach begins at approximately river mile 8. VandenBrulle asked if the ponds in the site plan were intended for volitional release. Langshaw stated this had not yet been determined. Ferguson

stated this has been considered for over-wintering, with trucking to an upstream release site. Another option is piping for volitional release.

Gayeski questioned if a backup site is being considered for alternatives to resolve uncertainty regarding homing. Langshaw indicates we have fish currently, and it will take 3-4 years to evaluate returns and spawning before decisions could be made regarding homing fidelity of these particular fish. Currently Grant PUD is performing net pen releases as the only alternative at this time, which will complicate evaluation of returns. There may be the ability to test upstream acclimation with small upstream net enclosures in the short term. This would provide a parallel path to the McComas site. The committee continues exploring other options.

Soest questioned Matt Karrer as to considerations which may need to be evaluated regarding bank erosion, meandering, etc. Karrer stated the river contains a good deal of fine grain material, so would likely want to armor the structure to protect against erosion. He asked if driving into the silt is an option and it likely is not.

Langshaw stated a benefit to this site is that there is a good deal of potential to supplement habitat and improve upon the existing status. Truscott stressed the gains which could be made with regard to habitat at this location. The group discussed the existing bridge and if it would be modified in the future.

Bugert questioned if net pens were a long term solution. There are issues with snow and access, limited acclimation time and uncertainty about providing for strong homing. The committee would prefer a location where over-wintering could occur.

A smolt trap is currently in operation to collect data on Chiwawa subyearlings. The group discussed imprinting benefits and the percentage that may migrate down from the acclimation site prior to outmigration.

Bugert questioned if the Tall Timber site was closely looked at. Langshaw indicated it was pursued, but logistics make meeting program needs much more difficult and facility needs are difficult to accommodate as well. Bugert also asked about Sears Creek, but Langshaw stated there have not been any supportive landowners in that area.

Would scatter planting be an option? Ferguson stated acclimation time would be very limited, and the maximum amount of time is needed for good imprinting.

Soest asked if the USFS would still be willing to negotiate on some of their land holdings on the White River. Langshaw indicates it still is an option, but the site would need adequate water intake, so this drastically limits options. This is also not presently good timing with planning process and the current status of USFS land.

Bugert questioned if an infiltration gallery has been considered. Ferguson stated yes, but sandy soil limits this option, and surface water is also very necessary for acclimation.

VandenBrulle asked about the brood collection facilities planned. Langshaw stated the committee is currently looking at the potential of a fish

wheel, and perhaps collection at Tumwater. Initial thoughts are to collect as low down the White River Basin as possible, for best run representation.

Hill questioned if public access has been considered and how would it be limited. Langshaw stated there are no public lands immediately adjacent at this time. Most security would be closely tied to the acclimation ponds themselves, but not necessarily for the rest of the property or the riparian corridor. Hill asked if there was any consideration for an educational component. Langshaw stated yes, it has been discussed but no determination has yet been made on how it will be implemented. Bugert suggested that cooperation with the Land Trust could be a potential, as this is something the Land Trust is currently working on.

Hill indicated the Land Trust is currently working on acquiring the two parcels immediately east of the McComas parcel, and this could complement the wetland improvements which could be made.

Ferguson commented with regard to the broodstock aspect, another component is the holding of adults. This is also being looked at closely. The group would prefer to limit trucking adults, if it can be minimized. Options on the use of existing facilities in the area were discussed. It would be preferable to have one location to both hold and spawn, with eyed eggs transferred to the Little White Salmon Hatchery facility.

Bugert questioned the status of the Nason Creek property. Langshaw stated that ground water is still being evaluated, but other sites are also being evaluated concurrently. Currently two wells have been drilled, and first results were not good. One option is to dig the well(s) deeper. Girard indicated some locations on Nason Creek have problems with sulfur and this may be a consideration. Discussed if treatment of the groundwater is an option.

With regard to the McComas site, Clark asked if it would be an option for culverts to be improved to counteract the flood water issue? Enlarging the bridge may do nothing to improve the habitat, but improved culverts would. Gayeski suggested having Gina McCoy of WDFW review the site for impacts, potential for improvement, etc.

Lenz questioned if there should be a working group involving Habitat members involved in the project to assist with the habitat considerations (Wenatchee Watershed Planning Unit Habitat group could be engaged). Truscott agreed. Soest indicated the CDLT had initially expressed interest in being involved in habitat projects.

Soest questioned what habitat work was occurring in Nason Creek. Lenz indicated several projects are underway.

Langshaw commented that we have been focusing conversation on White River because we currently have White River fish in varying broodyears. There are immediate concerns regarding release of smolts, current adults, etc. Discussed the downsizing of the program after already having broodstock for a larger release. There is concern over what to do with excess fish as it relates to Section 10 permit restrictions.

Gayeski questioned how the current HGMP draft compares to the early draft of 2004 which was an overview of the long-term program. Ferguson stated

there are some significant changes but some sections still need a good deal of work, such as the facilities sections.

VandenBrulle asked if the public comments will be submitted to NMFS as part of the public record. Ferguson indicated they would be included during the NEPA process. Grant PUD will be the lead on the HGMP, with Yakama Nation and WDFW being joint parties on the Section 10 Permit. The current temporary Section 10 is valid until 2010, so the need to rush the HGMP is not imminent.

Clark questioned the consideration of take on the White River, and the potential for harvest in the future. Truscott indicates harvest is one component with regard to over-escapement control. Currently both wild and hatchery Spring Chinook are listed, so harvest would need to be addressed in the Section 10 as an element to the program.

#### **Other:**

Langshaw expressed appreciation for the input on habitat aspects, input on the overall program, but would like additional input on the specific McComas site.

Girard stated he is present today specifically because of this site. Stated it is a very beautiful area, so the visual impact is key from his perspective. He stated he thought that a good portion of the site would be unaffected. He would like to see something other than a chain link fence as security measures. He had envisioned large concrete ponds, so the conceptual design presented today was much better than anticipated. He questioned if the water intake would be on a tower. Ferguson stated no, it would be no higher than road level, and likely much lower.

VandenBrulle stated a concern about the viability of the program being uncertain and the potential to have a developed site abandoned if the program fails. Truscott pointed out that the impacts to the site would leave this particular site in better condition with better habitat than is currently there. Hill, Bugert and Langshaw discussed the coordination between Grant PUD and the CDLT regarding habitat improvement with this site and the two sites adjoining.

Soest requested a cover letter to the HGMP which explains which sections are still needing additional work, which are not yet completed, etc. Truscott stated this should certainly all be considered a true working draft, and that all sections should be considered under development.

#### **Summary**

Rohr thanked all attendees for coming today and expressed appreciation for the positive dialogue.

#### **Next Meeting: July 19, 2007, Leavenworth (Location TBD)**

The intent is to hold the next Working Group meeting in Leavenworth area, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Rohr will send out a reminder notice and agenda prior to the meeting.