



## FINAL CONFERENCE CALL MINUTES

### Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Tuesday, Oct. 30

**PRCC Committee Members**

Scott Carlon/Bryan Nordlund, NMFS	Jim Craig, USFWS
Jerry Marco, CCT	Tom Dresser/Curt Dotson, GCPUD
Steve Parker/Bob Rose, YN	Carl Merkle, CTUIR
Carmen Andonaegui, WDFW	Denny Rohr, Facilitator

**ATTENDEES:**

Scott Carlon, NMFS	Denny Rohr, facilitator
Bryan Nordlund, NMFS	Curt Dotson, Grant PUD
Carmen Andonaegui, WDFW	Ben Lenz, Grant PUD
Joe Miller, WDFW	Shannon Lowry, Grant PUD
Jerry Marco, CCT	
Bob Rose, YN	
Jim Craig, USFWS	

**Action items:**

- Members will send contractor questions to Curt Dotson by Friday, Nov. 2, noon
- Curt Dotson will draft a letter of explanation for contractors
- Rohr will work on setting a meeting with the contractor's for Nov 28, with Nov. 26 as a backup date.

**Committee members will receive copies of RFP and the 3 proposals received and committee members will review same PRIOR to the conference call - Dotson distributed the RFPs on Oct. 25, 2007 for committee review.**

**B. Discussion of the RFP and Proposals, INCLUDING a discussion of proceeding with the entire proposal, OR, proceeding with a scaled-back proposal -** Dotson began the call by asking what objective of the study is, noting the RFP did not specifically request a three-year study. Lenz noted that the USGS/WDFW proposal likely does not include annual reports because of USGS' rigorous reporting process at the end of field studies. Andonaegui noted that interim reports and a final analysis would be necessary for the study. Carlon noted that the omission of reporting requirements within two of the three proposals could simply be because that task is assumed. Lenz stated that while none of the proposals reference the Priest Rapids Project Final License Application in general, potential contractor LGL had a hand in collecting data for the 2003 FLA, which could be easily assimilated into the proposed work. Andonaegui noted that as the RFP was developed it specifically requested that past studies be used as a baseline for the proposed predator study. Carlon noted that Fish Pro has significant experience with thorough literature review.

Dotson again asked the committee to define the study's objective. Members discussed the possibility of determining an abundance estimate by loosening the confidence interval. Such an approach could ultimately lower the cost of the study, noted Nordlund. Andonaegui stated that all three proposals are top-of-the-line and involve respected researchers who are familiar

with measuring predation effects in the Columbia River. Dotson express concern that if a predation problem is identified through the study, Grant PUD has no authorization to conduct control measures for walleye and smallmouth bass within the Priest Rapids Project. Miller stated that if sources of mortality are partitioned out and explored, and it is determined that a predation issue does in fact exist it could ultimately result in a change to WDFW regulations to reduce predation in an effort to increase fish survival through the reservoir. Andonaegui asked if it isn't in Grant PUD's best interest to determine whether a walleye and smallmouth bass issue exists. Carlon stated that part of the issue is reservoir mortality, noting the PRCC does not yet know what survival rates are for sub-yearlings or sockeye, but it could potentially mean Grant PUD would have to do less and could relax a little if the District is meeting dam passage survivals, in part, through WDFW's efforts to address predation issues. Carlon stated that such an approach could take some burden off Grant PUD and minimally lead to further discussion concerning passage measures. Rose requested that the study focus on walleye and smallmouth bass and look at a current abundance estimate with management/policy adjustments if warranted and repeated study in out years. Members discussed consumption analysis. Rose stated the issue can be addressed through questions to potential contractors for the study, noting that NNI dollars are not going to be used to provide the percentage of increase in survival, but rather to provide ways to improve survival. Rose proposed beginning with a Step 1 approach for literature review, gap analysis and development of a sampling protocol, estimating the average cost at \$100,000. Step 2 would involve two years of field study to determine an abundance estimate, costing an estimated \$500,000-\$600,000. Rose suggested eliminating step 3 (consumption analysis), with the alternative of using existing information or gathering it at a later date. Andonaegui noted that in a one-year study conducted by Burley and Poe in 1993, relative consumption determined the predator index. The data already exists if the PRCC agrees it still accurately reflects consumption, noted Andonaegui. Craig suggested asking potential contractors whether the existing consumption data is applicable. Dotson agreed, noting that while you can measure trends, each section of the reservoir has its unique predation issues, providing an example of Chelan PUD's 2005 and 2006 avian predation studies which revealed hooded mergansers as an avian predator. Andonaegui noted that while Burley and Poe's work was only conducted for one year, it looked at consumption estimates for the four predator species and calculated predator effects for the Priest Rapids Project pool. While abundance may have changed, the consumption environment could be the same, stated Andonaegui. Marco noted that literature review and gap analysis could determine whether consumption data is needed, noting the proposals include room for adjusting costs based on what Step 1 tasks reveal. Carlon asked if scaling the study back would require a new RFP. A contract can be written which requires tasks authorizations with specific budgets, noted Dotson. Craig expressed USFWS' concern with obligating NNI funds for the entire three-year study, but supports a "stepped" approach, beginning with literature review and gap analysis. Carlon stated that if trying to improve survival in a pool, there is only predation and infrastructure repair as a way to address the issue. Money spent on predation is an opportunity to improve survival in the pool, noted Carlon. If project has merit, then the costs aren't necessarily out of line. Andonaegui recommended that Step 1 tasks (A-literature review, B-gap analysis, and C-sampling protocol), and Step 2 (abundance estimate) be looked at with a request to potential contractors to determine whether the 1993 consumption analysis is applicable or whether additional study is needed. While a predator effects index cannot be completed without consumption info, it may not be needed, stated Andonaegui, if Burley and Poe consumption indices can be used. Co-managers may have an interest in broadening the scope of the study and cost-share opportunities could be explored if a wider study is warranted, stated Rose. Carlon stated that some would argue much is known about walleye in lower-river, but questions remain concerning bass consumption in summer months. Andonaegui stated that researchers from FishPro and LGL should know whether the 1993 Burley and Poe work is still applicable. Dotson expressed his concern on being able to conduct the study in 2008 due to time constraints involved with interviewing the potential contractors and permitting issues. Carlon suggested conducting Step 1 tasks in 2008, with the abundance estimate and

consumption analysis (if necessary) field work occurring in 2009. Andonaegui noted WDFW's commitment to permitting the study as soon as possible. A NMFS Section 10 research permit needs to be issued for the study and would take a minimum of six months following application, stated Carlon. Dotson noted that the summer migration generally begins in mid-June, noting that between interviewing the contractors and the contract process, a permit application would not be ready for submission until January or February. Carlon suggested conducting a literature review and gap analysis in 2008, with a permit in place in early 2009 for field work. Craig and Marco agreed. Rose agreed provided the interviews with potential contractors occur soon. Marco agreed but requested the sampling protocols occur in 2008, noting they would be required for permitting. Carlon requested that WDFW investigate whether the contractor could work under WDFW's permit, which would avoid the six-month timeline for NMFS. Andonaegui and Miller will investigate. Members approved conducting a predator study literature review, gap analysis, and sampling protocol in 2008, followed by submission of a permit for field study. Provided permitting is in place, field work will begin in 2009 based on the results of the literature review and gap analysis. Field work will involve conducting an abundance estimate study and consumption analysis (if determined necessary). Andonaegui and Miller will investigate the possibility of the contractor using WDFW's permit for the field work to avoid delay through the NMFS permitting process. Dotson asked why the committee is attempting to pare the study down if sub-yearling survival is the focus of the study. Andonaegui indicated that the only objective in scaling the scope back is to not overlap existing information. Members discussed whether using an open estimate of precision instead of specific confidence interval would affect the overall budget in the proposals. Members agreed to ask the question of the potential contractors.