



- Meeting Minutes -

Hanford Reach Working Group

Friday, October 19, 2007
10:00am – 2:00pm
30 C Street SW
Ephrata, Washington 98823

Attendees:

Bill Tweit, WDFW

Carmen Andonaegui, WDFW

Russell Langshaw, Grant PUD

Dave Duvall, Grant PUD

Bob Clubb, Douglas PUD

Tom Kahler, Douglas PUD

Shannon Lowry, Grant PUD

David Wills, USFWS (by phone)

Stephen Lewis, USFWS

Paul Wagner, NOAA Fisheries (by phone)

Carl Merkle, CTUIR

Joe Skalicky, USFWS (by phone)

Action Items:

- **USFWS will distribute a set of recommendations on what impacts would likely occur during variable flows in the Hanford Reach. The information will be used for discussion purposes in developing next year's alternative operation experiment.**
- **Joe Skalicky and Russ Langshaw will meet in November to discuss the USFWS recommendations (see above).**
- **Setting evaluation priorities will be added to the January 18, 2008 meeting agenda.**
- **Andonaegui will distribute WDFW's edited version of HRWG meeting protocols (dated June 15, 2007) to the HRWG for review and discussion at the January 18, 2008 meeting.**

- I. **Welcome/Introductions** - Attendees introduced themselves around the table and on the conference line.
- II. **Agenda Review** - No additions or changes were made.
- III. **Minutes Approval**
 - a. August 17, 2007 – Approved.
 - b. Sept. 6, 2007 conf. call – Approved.
- IV. **Update/discussion of what Grant PUD will be doing this fall (2007 spawning experiment) and the safety measures/fall back if the experiment is not working** – Grant PUD will operate under Reverse Load Factoring during the 2007-2008 spawning season and 2007 peaking experiment proposal has been terminated, stated Langshaw, noting several reasons why the proposed experiment is not being conducted, including a low-water year forecast, disagreement on performance measures, and the low number of spawners this year in the Hanford Reach. Because high-elevation spawning is correlated with abundance, the results would likely be questioned, stated Langshaw. Reverse Load Factoring began Monday, Oct. 15 following the first redd count. No redds were observed on the ground or aerially on Oct. 14. Further counts will occur on Sunday, Oct. 21. Langshaw stated that Grant PUD plans to look at conducting the proposed experiment in fall of 2008, noting he has met with Paul Wagner to discuss the issue. Langshaw stated that more people may be supportive if the evaluation was more clearly defined. Grant PUD is also interested in developing a Statement of Agreement to determine what the results of alternative operations would mean in terms of success, failure or uncertainty, stated Langshaw. Wagner noted there was ample discomfort this year because it was felt the experiment was going to be conducted without

people's input into the process and that the results would have been questioned. Wagner stated that further discussion on what the operation will be and how it will be evaluated needs to occur well before next year's experiment. Langshaw stated he anticipates starting discussions for 2008 operations as soon as possible. Discussions concerning the interpretation of the 2005 and 2006 study results also need to occur. While Grant PUD can agree the results did not indicate success, the results warrant further evaluation through additional studies, stated Langshaw. Tweit stated he believes peaking has the potential to further limit high-elevation spawning, but noted his appreciation that Grant PUD recognized the JFP's discomfort with the issues surrounding this year's experiment. Tweit also expressed interest in starting the process soon. Langshaw suggested starting with one-on-one discussion to determine what the JFP would be comfortable with and bring the information back to the group for discussion. Tweit stated a generic list of what's important should be identified – such as adult escapement level and water forecasts. WDFW has been concerned about the overall impact of flows on high-elevation spawning, but also with the low return issue. Should have a forecast based on jacks soon. Tweit suggested a list of what people believe is important to evaluate be added to the existing plan. Duvall stated that Grant PUD could also look at projected flows and how they affect the ability to conduct a study. Grant PUD will work closely with Grant PUD Dispatch to determine what projected flows are needed in terms of maximum and minimum. Langshaw stated that predicted low flows would have resulted in shorter-duration peaks which would have compromised the results. Langshaw also asked how important it is to maintain a longer peak with a higher magnitude, noting his concern with determining the importance of three-hour peaks, magnitude or is it a combination of the two. Clubb suggested a short-term "blow 'em out" peak and cited the study plan's objective of normal peaking operation which allows the District to generate power and still discourage spawning at a higher elevation. If there is a single peak, people would explain it as a low water year, stated Clubb and suggested further discussion among the JFP to determine the prior between peaking and magnitude.

Wagner asked how well developed is the model of the Hanford Reach. Langshaw stated in terms of determining habitat availability, the model could be troublesome because it is based on RLF, noting he would be hesitant to predict spawning habitat based on that model. The model could be effective at looking at what the pulse of water does down the Reach, stated Langshaw, noting that Battelle and USFWS have two different models. Wagner suggested using them as a tool to judge a Reach-wide effect. Tweit stated that the model would need re-calibrating to predict habitat under something other than RLF, noting that doing so would require a couple years of field data collection. The USFWS model requires a determination on what the depth-average mean velocity means in terms of stability and what the fish were actually experiencing, stated Langshaw, noting there may be better ways to develop a model but the technology does not yet exist to do so. Nor are there ways to evaluate the effects, stated Andonaegui, questioning how reliable the model is as a predictor of where spawning will occur.

Lewis asked if the flow forecast has changed. Wagner noted that flows will be in the 60 kcfs range until Nov. 1 before they take a step up to 95-110 kcfs Nov. 1-20. Grant PUD plans to operate at 72-73 kcfs in the nighttime hours and 60 kcfs during daytime hours, stated Langshaw, noting that by the time chum flows occur RLF will be the mode of operation. Determining index sites at White Bluffs is a concern because there is nothing to compare it to, stated Langshaw. While quality index sites can be determined, how the results are used is uncertain. Andonaegui asked if aerial photos will determine what the 70 kcfs elevation is outside of the Vernita Bar. This year's aerial flights will evaluate where redds are being developed at the 70kcfs elevation, said Langshaw, noting these studies can be done in conjunction with Paul Hoffarth of WDFW. Langshaw noted while there are photos for high-escapement years, the digitized spawning areas that USFWS presented did not extend beyond the 70 kcfs line. Therefore, it is not determined whether there was any high-elevation spawning.

Wagner requested proceeding with development of the 2008 peaking experiment proposal and includes monitoring of the downstream index areas. Langshaw stated that Grant PUD has spoken with Battelle and John Skalicky of USFWS concerning indexing sites. Langshaw asked if the metrics at Vernita bar also apply at W Bluffs, noting Skalicky isn't concerned about high-elevation spawning, but rather stability of flows, and expressed great reservation at focusing on high-elevation spawning while ignoring deep-elevation spawning. Langshaw is concerned that there is no evaluation of what RLF does to deep-elevation spawning. Lewis stated that the difference in velocity attributes and how they affect spawning behavior is a key area. Having extra time to work on the proposal will be helpful, stated Tweit, noting the assurance that dewatering is not occurring

in RLF, which was the Vernita Bar Agreement's original intent. We have a system that is working but the question remains whether alternative operations offer an equivalent amount or better level of protection, stated Tweit. As long as operations meet performance measures and offer an equivalent level of protection, different flow management tools could be considered. Provided there is equal or better protection, it is Grant PUD's decision from there, stated Tweit, noting if there is agreement on performance measures that offer the same protection that as the 1988 Vernita Bar Agreement then it's a good thing to look at alternative flow operations. Wagner stated that NOAA Fisheries would like to take a broader approach to what's already been measured, noting if the focus is exclusively on measuring Vernita Bar effects, the broader effects downstream could be missed. Lewis agreed that a broader approach is necessary. Tweit stated that under RLF, the Vernita Bar seems to function as a good indicator as to what was happening to the fall Chinook population in the entire Reach. Under different operations, however, Vernita Bar might not be as good of an index. Wagner and Lewis agreed. We know what we have from an adult return perspective, but if we use that as our only measure it could have potential affects, stated Tweit. Langshaw expressed concern with the assumption that operations under the 1988 Vernita Bar Agreement are the only important factors in measuring adult escapement, noting there are many other factors involved. Because there is a natural fall Chinook population which appears to be healthy and self-sustaining above four dams, the suite of things we're doing must be working, stated Tweit. Langshaw clarified for Lewis that reverting back to RLF is under the 2004 HRFCCPA, noting that equivalent protection might be flexibility in investigation of different types of operations. Priorities are evaluating impacts throughout entire Reach, particularly the White Bluffs area. Additionally, clearly defining the evaluation metrics, what makes a valuable study, and defining what previous and future studies mean, are equally important. Identification of triggers which dictate a good test year – escapement levels, water conditions, etc – would be helpful to the discussion, stated Tweit, suggesting that Grant PUD provide thoughts or an outline of discussion points, with a focus on what the effects of operations are on minimizing the formation of high-elevation spawning and how important it is to focus on deep-water redds, while not losing track of the level of protection provided in the HRFCCPA. Lewis requested that Grant PUD work with Don Anglin in looking at White Bluffs indexing. Clubb suggested an analysis of different flows to make sure all factors are considered, much of which could be done on paper to work through what's realistic and the capability of operating different regimes. Langshaw noted that Grant PUD has done a fair amount of paperwork, but hasn't looked at other alternative operations and what affects the different bounds are on what we want to do. There was also a goal with the 2007 experiment to simplify the plan for operations which are easier to maintain, noting that in 2006 the operation regime was more complicated (*Joe Skalicky joins the meeting by phone*). USFWS could put together a set of recommendations based on current and historic data to help with discussion, stated Skalicky, noting an area of concern is what happens to spawning during chum flows. Dresser noted that Wanapum and Priest Rapids fluctuate, which can cause erosion and cultural resource issues, in addition to fish issues. Skalicky stated he will develop a matrix or flow chart for use to initiate discussion, noting people may be surprised that there is flexibility in operations, while still protecting habitat. Andonaegui requested the group set priorities in terms of which evaluations are important. Discussion will occur at the next meeting, including on the issue of how many years the experiment will occur.

- V. **Discussion on Statement of Agreement regarding experiment** – A memo of termination of the 2007 experiment will be distributed, stated Langshaw. Future studies and performance measures could be incorporated into a Statement of Agreement, stated Dresser.
- VI. **Letters to FERC from Umatilla Tribe, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game, and Northwest Sport Fishing Industry Association asserting a compliance complaint regarding flow operations** – Three letters were received by FERC in the last few weeks opposing the 2007 experiment (Alaska Fish and Game, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Northwest Sports Fishing Association). Langshaw stated that Grant PUD will continue to operate under the 2004 Hanford Reach Fall Chinook Protection Program Agreement because it provides additional protection during the in- and-outmigration periods. Grant PUD is preparing a response to FERC. Tweit stated that for a variety of reasons, it was smart of Grant to terminate this year's experiment because consensus could not be reached on performance measures, noting WDFW's appreciation of both the termination and of Grant PUD's willingness to implement the Agreement early. By signing Agreement, WDFW expressed its support of the program and believes it provides broader protection. In Grant PUD's response to FERC, Tweit stated he isn't sure how important it is to re-hash any of that and hopes Grant PUD can respond and move forward. The group discussed

whether letters of support would provide anything new and or whether they could potentially drag FERC's relicensing of the Priest Rapids Project out. Dresser stated he will discuss the issues individually with the Signatories to the Agreement. Carl Merkle stated that CTUIR will be looking forward to seeing Grant PUD's response to FERC.

- VII. **Meeting protocols** –Andonaegui stated that WDFW is uncomfortable with continuing to operate the HRWG without any meeting protocols which would clarify how to handle potential disagreements. The Priest Rapids Project Salmon and Steelhead Settlement Agreement (SSA) does not outline specific meeting protocols, stated Dresser, noting he developed draft protocols last spring which blend both what's in the SSA and what was in the draft 401 at that time. The final 401, however, included an unexpected change that creates a separate working group (Fall Chinook Working Group), which includes non-Signatories to the 2004 HRFPPA. The 401 details protocols and discusses this advisory group of non-Signatories, prompting Grant PUD to request clarification from WDOE on the role of the advisory group. A meeting has been scheduled for early November. Dresser noted it is not Grant PUD's intent to exclude anyone from the "table," but clarification is needed. Andonaegui agreed with getting clarification, but noted the 401 does not go into affect until the PRP License is issued. Andonaegui requested members review the 401 prior to License issuance, but also suggested that protocols for the HRWG created by SSA outlines the HRWG's involvement if river fluctuations are experimented with. Andonaegui recommended the HRWG develop working protocols and revisit them after the 401 becomes effective, when membership potentially becomes broader. Andonaegui stated that the 401 recognizes the SSA parties and HRA parties as having authority concerning provisions within those agreements, but broadens input relative to development of studies. Dresser noted that if a non-Signatory requests operation changes, it will affect the focus of the HRWG. Tweit stated he hopes anyone who is at the table feels they have a voice and are part of the discussion, even if they are not a voting participant. Until the License is in place, however, formalizing decision-making at the November meeting has merit. Tweit also stated that whatever is finalized will probably work for both forums. Andonaegui will distribute WDFW's version of the protocols (dated June 15, 2007) to the HRWG for review and discussion at the HRWG November meeting.

- VIII. **Next meeting – The next regular HRWG meeting is scheduled for Friday, Jan. 18, 2008 – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**