

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Cowlitz River Advisory Group

May 16, 2019

Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery, 125 Salmon Ln, Salkum, WA 98582

Attendance

Cowlitz River Advisory Group Members:

- Anthony Crocco, *Fishermen on the Upper Cowlitz Basin*
- Bob Reid, *The Cowlitz Plan for Restoration*
- Butch Smith, *Illwaco Charter Association*
- Carl Burke, *Northwest Sportsfishing Industry Assoc. and Northwest Marine Trade Assoc.*
- Cody Clark, *Business/ Sport fishing*
- David Passmore, *Outdoors sport fisherman*
- Don Glaser, *Friends of the Cowlitz*
- Gene Tripp, *Sports fishermen*
- Greg King, *Friends of the Cowlitz*
- Hank Emond, *Sports fishermen*
- Jack Tipping, *CCA*
- James Shinn, *CCA*
- Jon Vigre, *CCA*
- Larry Pryor, *Northwest Fisheries Enhancement*
- Lonnie Goble, *East Lewis County Fishermen*
- Paul Ockerman, *NW Guides and Anglers Association*
- Randy LeDuc, *CCA*
- Rudy Salakory, *Cowlitz Indian Tribe's Natural Resources Department*
- Stan Bartle, *Fishermen on the Tilton*

Tacoma Power:

- Keith Underwood

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Staff:

- Kelly Cunningham, by phone
- Bryce Glaser
- John Serl
- Brian Gale
- Sam Gibbons
- Tom Wadsworth
- Myrtice Dobler

Public:

Heath Heikkita, Dale Scott, Ron Lenkneir, Buddy Rose, Bob Hampton, Dale Lewis, Marc Bush

Meeting Agenda

- I. Introductions and opening remarks (~15 minutes)
 - a. Ground Rules reminder – Kelly/Bryce
 - b. Passing of Dan Tudor
 - c. Finalize Meeting Notes from February 28, 2019 - Myrtice
 - i. Action Item Review - Myrtice
- II. Updates – (~50 minutes)
 - a. WDFW budget Update – Kelly
 - b. Fall Fishery update – Tom/Bryce
 - c. 2019 summer steelhead recycling- Sam
 - d. Tacoma Power Updates - Keith
 - i. Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Master Plan
 - ii. FHMP schedule/updates
 - iii. Tilton River – Secondary release site
 - e. Steelhead Programs – FTC workshop update – Bryce
- III. Hatchery Production Options (~20 minutes) (Sam/Brian/Bryce/Tom)
- IV. Upper Cowlitz Fishery issues (~15 minutes) Lonnie Goble
- V. Public Comment (~15 minutes)
- VI. Action Item review/Adjourn (5 minutes)

Introductions and opening remarks

After introductions, Bryce reviewed the ground rules the CRAG developed about a year ago.

The sad news of Dan Tudor’s passing was also shared. There will be a memorial service, and interested members can contact Bryce for more information.

Last meeting’s notes were reviewed, no edits were made. Finalized notes will be on the website shortly.

Action Item Review

Item	Assigned to
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Send ocean condition NOF handout/PPT to group	Tom
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Acronym cheat sheet	Myrtice
<input type="checkbox"/> Send out list of important dates – open FTC meeting NOF meetings	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Send out email with doodle poll and base topics to talk about, remind advisory members they can send additional topics in	Myrtice
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action plan at the end of meeting- with conclusion?	Myrtice

Updates

WDFW budget Update

Two main outcomes of the 2019 legislative session: no fee bill and sunset of the CRSSE program.

No Fee Bill

The legislature didn't pass our fee bill, instead we were given \$24 million pretty heavily loaded towards first fiscal year (~\$15million for 1st year) with the expectation we will ask for supplemental funds.

- Based on current need and estimated increases, our financial gap is about \$23 million, most of our need comes from cost of living increases.
- At this time, we expect to be able to keep all 8 of our at-risk hatcheries operating.

CRSSE

When this program was established there was a sunset date. Since then, we've received several extensions of the date. This year we proposed to eliminate the sunset date. The legislature didn't support elimination, but seemed supportive of a four year extension. Unfortunately the legislature did not move forward on it this session. This means:

- We will no longer require the endorsement after midnight June 30th.
- We will no longer receive funds of about \$3.2 million from that program.

Currently WDFW is looking at options such as: backfilling from general funds, using the money available now, and ways to continue the projects.

Orca Funding

Orca money was directed for State, Tribe, and PUD hatchery production. The problem for state is we didn't get the funding to review hatcheries' need for repairs/upgrades, this could restrict our ability to increase production beyond status quo.

Fall Fishery update

The North of Falcon process is wrapping up and we have proposed seasons.

Fall Chinook

It's not a great forecast for this year, it's looking about the same as last year.

- Last year we only made 50% of our broodstock goal on the Cowlitz.
- This year, we are starting off conservatively to try to make sure we get brood.

If the run is larger than expected we will look at reopening the fishery.

WDFW recognizes that there will be Cowlitz fish caught in the Lower Columbia. However the mainstem is not constrained by the tributary tule forecast, and we were not able to effect those regulations.

Coho

We are expecting a pretty big coho run, forecasting about 70,000 fish for Cowlitz. Based on this outlook, we propose an increase of the adult daily limit to four, still keeping the six-fish limit.

- CRAG members expressed concern over the increased bag limit and accuracy of the forecast
- WDFW will be tracking the run closely and expects to be able to balance fishery needs

Winter Steelhead

Winter steelhead is wrapping up. The hatcheries met brood goals, and based on creel information it was a pretty decent fishery.

Summer Steelhead

We are already getting some summer steelhead at the hatchery, but the forecast is not good for Columbia basin overall. There is no Cowlitz specific forecast for steelhead.

Due to the expected low return of upper Columbia and Snake River summer steelhead, we are adding regulations in several Columbia River tributaries to protect fish these fish that temporarily use the lower sections of these rivers as cold-water refuges before continuing their migration up the Columbia River. The following regulations in the lower Cowlitz River are planned:

- Night closure: from mouth to Lexington Bridge for August 1 – October 31
- July 1- 31: 1 steelhead daily limit below Lexington Bridge August 1 - 30: release all steelhead below Lexington Bridge
- September 1 – October 31: 1 steelhead daily limit below Lexington Bridge
- Above Lexington Bridge: fishery will be status quo for now (3 steelhead daily limit)

2019 summer steelhead recycling

With summer steelhead forecast for the Columbia basin not being great, we are looking at expanding window on the front end to recycle fish. Typically fish are recycled June 15-August 15, this year we are starting recycling now.

- Concern was expressed that it won't benefit many fisherman now,
- If the steelhead run is better than expected we might reach our cap prior to Aug 15.

There was discussion over the recycling cap- the opportunity to change the cap is in the FHMP, which is what we are working on presently through the FTC.

Tacoma Power Updates

Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Master Plan

At the end of 2018 the master plan was produced. It's now going through cost-benefit analysis to see which changes would be most beneficial.

Tacoma Power will be phasing improvements to the hatcheries and expect a six year construction window. Some items have already started (working on the ozone plant, two ponds starting reconstruction.)

FHMP schedule/updates

Tacoma Power is taking information from discussions and workshops with WDFW and writing species specific chapters. Next month they expect to have the Chinook chapter done. Tacoma Power plans to bring drafts to WDFW and CRAG for review at the same time, this is an effort to keep the process moving.

- Concern was expressed over the quality of the product CRAG members would review since WDFW wouldn't have had a prior opportunity to review.

Tilton River – Secondary release site

We've identified a location at Bremer Bridge as the secondary release site. Tacoma Power presented plans to the DOT, and received minimal comments. The hope is to get permits and complete construction in time for this year's fall Chinook run.

Distribution of task:

- TPU- lead on permitting
- WDFW- lead on management strategy- how we will utilize that new site.

Steelhead Programs – FTC workshop update

The workshops discuss the major topics of each species, work through themes and information to provide a better product. Several species already covered:

- Coho
- Steelhead
- Chum
- Cutthroat

Hatchery Production Options

This is an extension of last meetings handout. In options one through three we don't increase the number of fish, but would raise more fish to a larger size, hopefully improving survival rates and returns. In option four we would use the North Toutle Hatchery to put out small fish in June release, these would be bonus fish above and beyond normal capacity.

- Using gravel pits in Toledo to grow fish to a larger size was advocated. This would be a mid-term solution.

Tacoma Power is still developing options for satellite rearing facilities and strategizing how to engage WDFW and CRAG in the process. The first draft is expected to be done in July.

Upper Cowlitz Fishery issues

Lonnie was unable to attend but sent his written statement in. This was read to the group. Lonnie discussed several issues he’s experienced since his involvement:

- The chute establishment and challenges for releases into the upper watershed
- Fish ladder vs. habitat
- Discussion of fishing opportunities- removal of trout and protection of wild runs
- Suggestions:
 - “Flood” the river with all the species for 3 years, let it work itself out
 - Set up cameras at key points to monitor fish movement

Public Comment

Marc Bush provided public comment. His main topics/questions were:

- We keep blaming ocean conditions- which we have no control over. We do have control over hatchery production- what are we shooting for? Saving money/making the best fishery we can
- Questions on where we are with pinniped lethal control
- Why are we managing release of smolts not return of adults?

Action Items

Action Item	Assigned to
Share budget updates when available	Bryce/Kelly/Myrtice
Send members fishery forecast	Tom
At next meeting: provide +/- of budget for Region 5 and Cowlitz	Bryce/Kelly

Parking lot Items

- Fall Chinook discussion- redd survey compared to brood
- Bird Predation
- Pinniped Update

List of Common Acronyms in Region 5

ACC.....	Aquatic Coordination Committee (Lewis River)
ATS.....	Lewis River Aquatic Technical Subgroup
CRSSE.....	Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement
CRAG.....	Cowlitz River Advisory Group
CRR.....	Cowlitz River Restoration (fund)
FHMP.....	Fisheries and Hatchery Management Plan (Cowlitz River)
fpp.....	Fish per pound
FTC.....	Fisheries Technical Committee (Cowlitz River)
HGMP.....	Hatchery and Genetic Management Plan
MA BIOP.....	Mitchell Act Biological Opinion
NMFS.....	National Marine Fisheries Services
pHOS.....	Proportion Hatchery Origin Spawners
RMT.....	Regional Management Team
RSI.....	Remote Site Incubator
TPU.....	Tacoma Public Utilities (aka; Tacoma Power)
UCR.....	Upper Cowlitz River