

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Ad-Hoc Coastal Steelhead Advisory Group

Meeting #5 Summary

Thursday, August 11, 2022

Time: 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**Attendees**

Advisory Group Members

Robert “Bob” Kratzer WA State Guides Association  
Chris Ringlee Private angler  
Geoff McMichael Mainstem Fish Research, LLC  
Jason Rolfe The Flyfish Journal  
Jessica Helsley Wild Salmon Center  
Jonathan Stumpf Trout Unlimited  
Lee Geist Private angler  
Luke Probasco Private angler  
Mara Zimmerman Coast Salmon Partnership  
Rich Simms Wild Steelhead Coalition  
Roy Morris Retired fishing guide

Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Staff

Toby Harbison WDFW – Fishery Biologist  
James Losee WDFW – Region 6 Program Manager  
Eryn Couch WDFW – Communications Manager  
Amy Edwards WDFW  
Anja Huff WDFW  
Rob Allan WDFW

Facilitation Team

Greer Maier Triangle Associates, Facilitator  
Olivia Smith Triangle Associates, Facilitation Support


**Meeting Materials**

[August 11 Meeting Recording](#)

[August 11 Meeting Slides](#)

[August 11 Meeting Agenda](#)

[June 14 Meeting Summary](#)

| <b>Action Items</b>  | <b>Who</b>             | <b>Due Date</b> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|
| Advisory Group members to provide input in comments to the  <a href="#">August 11 WDFW Presentation Slides.</a> | Advisory Group Members | September 12    |
| Advisory Group members to consider and comment on alternative models and frameworks for assessing hatchery risks for WDFW to document and consider in future management                            | Advisory Group Members | Ongoing         |

|   |                        |  |
|---|------------------------|--|
| efforts beyond the December deadline for the CSPIP.   |                        |  |
| <p><b>Homework:</b><br/>Think about the following question and come to the next meeting prepared to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What research is critical to improving coastal steelhead fisheries management?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the most important next steps in advancing management of coastal steelhead? How might those steps fit in to Regional Management Plans?</i></li> </ul>  | Advisory Group Members | September 12   |
| <p>Review and provide edits in track changes or comment bubbles to the updated CSPIP draft with the following new sections:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Future Regional Management Plan</i> (Section 5, Page 40, Line 1335),<br/><i>Human Dimensions section</i> (Section 4.5, Page 36, Line 1181)<br/><i>Critical Research topics</i> (Section 6, Page 43, Line 1449).</p> <p>Send comments to Toby Harbison and Triangle with initials in the file name. Triangle will post all comments to the SharePoint site here.</p> | Advisory Group Members | August 31  |
| Share the hatchery <a href="#">white paper</a> and CSPIP Hatchery Section with Advisory members when available.   | WDFW                   | Complete <a href="#">White paper</a> (shared 8/19)<br><br>Updated CSPIP with Hatchery Sections (shared 8/17) |
| WDFW to send Advisory Group stock assessment methodology and spawning index reaches for the Humptulips River.   | WDFW                   | ASAP   |
| Incorporate Advisory Group feedback and produce a revised/track-changed draft and update the response to comment matrix for Advisory Group members to review ahead of the next meeting.   | WDFW                   | September 6 (adjusted for Labor Day)   |
| <b>Future Agenda Topics</b>   |                        |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Test fisheries</i></li> <li>• <i>Additional considerations for scaling (carry-over item)</i></li> </ul>   |                        |  |

- *Habitat (carry-over item)*
- *Hatchery White Paper and Hatchery Section*
- *Global warming and ocean conditions*
- *Funding opportunities to advance research/economic opportunities*
- *Considerations for life history diversity (e.g., winter steelhead)*

### **Welcome and Introductions**

The facilitator, Greer Maier with Triangle Associates (Triangle), welcomed Advisors and invited feedback on the process before giving an overview of the meeting agenda. Olivia Smith, Triangle, reviewed the meeting action items and led a round of introductions.

There was a brief discussion about the purpose and strategy for piloting a test fishery. Chris Ringlee reminded the group about comments he submitted on the test fishery section. WDFW noted that there was a need to have further conversation on the topic of test fisheries and suggested inviting Ryan Lothrop, WDFW- Columbia River Fishery Manager, to the September meeting. Bob Kratzer shared he participated in the Columbia River test fishery and could help inform that discussion as well. This topic was added to the list of future agenda topics.

### ***Draft Coastal Steelhead Proviso Implementation Plan (CSPIP)***

Toby Harbison, WDFW- Fishery Biologist, gave an update on the status of plan development. An updated draft will be available for review in the next few weeks. Some sections are pending the availability of additional technical information. Feedback is welcome at any point leading up to the December 1, 2022, deadline but feedback well ahead of the deadline will be easier to incorporate. Triangle will send our materials and reminders to Advisors for sections needing review ahead of meetings.

- Roy Morris suggested several topics be addressed by WDFW and the Advisory Group including stress placed on species due to global warming and changing ocean conditions; protection of wild steelhead as an absolute over harvest; funding and job opportunities available to support research and management decisions; and discussion of how WDFW plans to recover wild winter steelhead runs while adding hatchery fish to the system.
- WDFW reiterated that a desired outcome of the Proviso is to secure additional funding and the \$200,000-\$300,000 was allocated to begin this work.

### ***Draft Hatchery Section White Paper***

James Losee, WDFW- Region 6 Project Manager, gave an update on the hatchery white paper that was mentioned at the last Advisory Group meeting. The white paper gives an overview of analysis done on coast steelhead hatcheries. He noted that this white paper is a resource WDFW intends to use in developing the CSPIP but is not a requirement of the Proviso. He provided an update on the status of the internal technical review underway and confirmed Advisory Group members will get to chance to review the white paper as soon as it is available. NOTE: The white paper was released to the Advisory Group after the meeting and is now [linked here](#).

### ***Questions and Discussion:***

There was a brief discussion about how the white paper could be used in developing the CSPIP.

The paper summarizes information from a specific point in time that has since evolved, but it also provides an overview of methods and approaches that could be used at any time to evaluate hatchery influence. The CSPIP is designed to be an adaptive tool and could incorporate these tools.

- Luke Probasco noted the existing science on the harmful impacts of hatcheries and noted several studies and published papers on the topic by J.R. McMillan and M. Kleiss. WDFW explained that the white paper includes genetic impacts of hatcheries but does not consider other impacts from hatcheries. The Advisory Group could consider weighing in other impacts.
- In response to a question from Jonathan Stumpf about the limitations and implications of how modeling in the white paper was conducted, WDFW explained the tools and models will be the same, but they are working to make it adaptable and applicable to different scenarios to understand wild steelhead abundances and trapping practices. A request was made for Advisors to note areas they want to see updated or changed in the SSMP.

The facilitator confirmed the white paper and hatchery section of the CSPIP will be shared with Advisors when they are available.

#### ***WDFW Fish Committee August 4 Presentation***

James Losee led a discussion about the August 4 Fish Committee meeting and concerns raised by Advisory Group members about the material that was shared. James thanked Advisors for their diligence and helping WDFW be accountable. He walked through the specific concerns raised which included the use of outdated Proviso language and the use of a graph that were potentially misleading ([slide 3 & 4](#)). James noted that he has taken steps with the Fish Committee and meeting participants to correct these errors and clear up any confusion related to the material presented (e.g. corrected Proviso language and the updated graph with additional information included).

#### ***Questions and Discussion:***

- In response to a question about the Proviso language from Lee Geist about what the term river system means (river, drainage, or region?), WDFW explained that Advisors will be tackling this question at their September 12 meeting which will cover region specific plans and a discussion of how to group and split systems.
- Rich Simms suggested including the Bogachiel in the river specific plan discussion.
- Lee Geist asked about where the spawning indexes reaches are in the Humptulips and how they have changed over time, James offered to share the stock assessment methodology.

**Action item:** James Losee to send Advisory Group stock assessment methodology and spawning indexes for the Humptulips River.

#### ***Hatchery Presentation***

Toby Harbison gave a brief overview on the Proviso implementation strategy to set the context for the hatchery discussion ([slides 5-8](#)). Advisors were then asked to share out on the homework assignment which was to read and provide feedback on the artificial production section of the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan (SSMP):

- Geoff McMichael asked why Regional Management Plans (RMP) identified in the 2008 SSMP were not developed and implemented as outlined. James Losee explained the delay has been due to a lack of resources on the coast and managers have identified the major areas of concern with inconsistent guidelines. Toby Harbison added that one of the goals of the CSPIP is to develop and implement RMPs.
- Jonathan Stumpf noted that the SSMP is outdated at this point and asked if WDFW could speak to what the science says about what updates are needed in artificial production. James Losee noted there are several principles in the SSMP that are still relevant, but there is new information and tools that the current planning effort will incorporate (as discussed at the last meeting and as will be discussed at this meeting). He also noted there are several management objectives that have yet to be met and WDFW recognizes the importance of complying with current policies. The approach to achieving goals and tracking success needs to change to reflect the current understanding. That is what the Advisory Group can help with.
- There was a brief discussion about the need to obtain additional funding and resources to update the science used in management and planning. Advisors were invited to share specific information they think is relevant and would like WDFW to use.
- Mara Zimmerman commented on several areas of the SSMP she saw as important to discuss. This included the need to address risks of hatchery programs as they relate to watershed goals (as yet to be defined). Mara also mentioned several actions listed to reduce risk of hatchery programs, including scaling the size of the hatchery programs, but there could also be changes to fisheries and changes in ways to ensure fish return to the hatchery facility where the fish are released. WDFW shared that there are other actions beyond scaling that will be presented on during this meeting and invited Advisors to share if WDFW missed any. James Losee responded the CSPIP will strive to include details on how to address those concerns related to watershed goals.
- Geoff McMichael reiterated that the priority should be implementing what the 2008 SSMP outlines rather than spending a lot of time updating it with the latest science. He agreed the artificial production section is limited by only focusing on genetic interaction components.
- The group discussed the timeline and future needs to implement the CSPIP.
- Bob Kratzer noted there has been progress and WDFW has taken some action since the SSMP was developed (ex. creating wild gene banks, removing hatchery plants where there weren't trapping facilities, and stopped plantings of steelhead in the upper Hoh and Bogacheil). James Losee added there were 24 rivers in Region 6 that WDFW used to release hatchery steelhead and no longer does.
- Lee Geist revisited the question of why there is a need for a test fishery. James Losee reiterated that WDFW is evaluating the purpose and need for a test fishery and emphasized the need for more discussion at the next meeting.

Toby Harbison continued presenting on the CSPIP structure including hatcheries and management regimes (conservation, transitional, and maintenance) ([slide 8](#)) before James Losee gave an overview of considerations for hatchery targeted fisheries in the transitional and maintenance regimes (green and yellow). He then showed how modeling tools (e.g. All-H analyzer- AHA and Demographic GeneFlow Model- DGM models) can be applied to the question of hatchery scaling of releases to meet SSMP goals for genetic risk. James showed how modeling can be used to evaluate release levels, using Bingham Creek and the Skookumchuck + Newakum systems as examples ([slides 9-19](#)). In some cases, the modeling may show there is the opportunity to release more fish and, in some cases, releases may be too high to meet SSMP standards for genetic risk.

### ***Questions and Discussion:***

- Geoff McMichael reiterated the need to examine impacts from hatcheries beyond genetic impacts. A suggestion was made to change the words “genetic impacts” to “unintended impacts” to include additional impacts in the proposed CSPIP structure for hatcheries ([slide 7](#)). WDFW invited Advisors to share what impacts are important to consider and incorporate and ways to approach assessing and managing those risks.
- Rich Simms raised a concern about how increasing releases of hatchery spring chinook impact production of wild steelhead, and how flood events impact habitat availability. WDFW responded they do consider effects of one species on another but mainly for adults. There was a brief discussion on the impact of non-steelhead, hatchery juveniles on wild steelhead. Geoff McMichael offered to share information about other hatchery impacts on steelhead.
- Roy Morris and WDFW discussed the relationship of hatcheries to fishing opportunities. WDFW explained their goal is to provide opportunities and reduce the risks from hatchery fish on spawning grounds. It was noted how balancing harvest with escapement has led to the current situation with reduced opportunity and threatened survival of wild stocks. Roy shared a preference for seeing dissatisfaction with the loss of harvest opportunity rather than seeing stocks collapse and go extinct.
- In response to a question from Jason Rolfe about the rationale for continuing to release hatchery fish if a population is in a conservation regime, WDFW explained the need is produce the minimum number of broodstock to keep the program going. There is a need to evaluate this with co-managers to create a flexible system that allows hatcheries to “turn back on” production if and when wild steelhead abundance increases and the population transitions to a different phase. The alternative would be to have to bring in out-of-area/non-native broodstock to restart the program. It was noted that sufficient monitoring and tools are needed to produce a fishery with high degree certainty, and areas are closed when there is a lack of resources to monitor, which is when a conservation focus may be needed. A suggestion was made to add an option to stop or pause hatchery operations under the conservation focus regime.
- Lee Geist commented that closing the hatcheries is a tool for *preservation* not *conservation* of the population. He gave the example of the North American Wildlife Model and Dingell-Johnson Act as ways to approach management. WDFW shared that their desired approach is to move populations from a conservation focus to a maintenance focus.

- Jonathan Stumpf asked if there are models looking at ecological risks (ex. competition, predation, disease) that go beyond the genetic models being presented. Toby Harbison shared the models in the CSPIP are a starting place given the restrictive timeline. The management plan section will help identify the current status and future goals. Toby asked Advisors what other risks to consider and suggestions for alternative frameworks/models to assess those risks. She mentioned that there will be a place in the CSPIP for WDFW to document future management recommendations beyond the December deadline and this information could be documented in that section. WDFW welcomes recommendations for future considerations. Jonathan Stumpf noted appreciation for WDFW documenting these recommendations.
- In response to a question from Chris Ringlee if the hatchery section includes discussion of conservation hatchery programs, WDFW responded conservation programs would only be research focused.
- In response to a question from Bob Kratzer about the difference between segregated and integrated hatchery programs, and how river systems are being analyzed, WDFW responded that the analysis is divided by models, not by program type. There was a discussion on the need to consider hydropower, social, and tribal impacts in managing steelhead hatchery programs. James Losee emphasized the need to do additional work after the CSPIP goes to legislature and receives funding.
- Mara Zimmerman raised a concern with the use of conservation programs and shared a preference for restructuring current harvest programs to sustain fishing opportunities rather than changing their focus. She suggested a conservation program could be engaged in the event of a catastrophic event (ex. disease), but the situation on the Washington coast is not dire enough to warrant the need for a conservation hatchery program. Mara suggested that with limited funding available, funds could be focused on habitat restoration and escapement monitoring. She stated that small populations of steelhead can rebuild themselves with healthy habitats and moderate fishing/marine mammal predation rather than through hatchery supplementation.
- Luke Probasco agreed that steelhead populations can recover, referencing the success on the Toutle River.

James Losee was not able to finish his presentation on hatcheries. The group agreed to finish the hatchery discussion at the next meeting and advisors were invited to review and provide comments on the meeting slides ([linked here](#)).

### **Wrap Up and Next Steps**

The facilitator thanked the Advisory Group for their engagement and thoughtful questions and proposed to move the habitat topic to the next meeting on September 12, 2022 since the hatchery discussion took the full meeting.

### **Public Comments:**

- Robert Larsen shared Ron Garner asked him to speak on behalf of Puget Sound Anglers

(PSA). Robert asked the group if they have any examples of situations where all hatchery fish have been eliminated and improved wild fish. Robert said he would like to know of any data from where that has happened. He stated that his belief is that hatchery fish provide a “buffer” for wild fish. When removing all “hatchery fish” there is 100% predation on wild fish. Robert noted that everyone seems against hatcheries, but this may be a worse thing for wild fish. He stated that if you are not overshooting the target for percent hatchery-origin spawners (pHOS) there could be benefits. For example, in the Cedar River they removed hatcheries and realized other things like the locks were causing the issues and the population basically went extinct. Robert noted that he is concerned we don’t have co-managers involved in this process. Without co-manager buy-in, he believes they will fight because those fish are important to them. He wants to see a plan that will work for wild fish, and acknowledges the short time period, but believes important things are missing.

- David Moscovitz, Conservation Angler, noted that he appreciated the time the group has put into this before asking what the mandate is of the group. He referred to the slide with the Proviso language and noted that WDFW described it as the mandate for the Advisory Group. He believes the mandate for WDFW is in the revised code of WA, RCO. 417.012 which provides a clear mandate to protect wild fish and wild animals. He advised staff to look at the section about providing opportunity, economic wellbeing, and stability to the fishing industry. David shared he believes that is a critical element of WDFW’s duty and the citizens of Washington are interested in these rivers. Next, David mentioned that closures are not part of conservation. In this case, he would recommend thinking about the Washington conservation model and looking at hunting where closures are used frequently to rebuild species. Closure is preservation and conservation. David urges the CSAG to consider what we’re doing about rebuilding wild steelhead in this landscape, not just next season, or the coming fishing season, but long term for citizens of Washington and people worldwide who come to the peninsula to see wild steelhead. David mentioned the fact that tribes say to look seven generations ahead, and we need to be doing the same thing. It can’t always be about opportunity- How do you measure opportunity? When buying a license, you are buying a chance to go fishing and be on Washington’s incredible rivers. David concluded by stating “the fish and rivers owe us nothing”.

*The meeting officially adjourned at 8:08 p.m. PST.*