

Jeffery C. Allen
Chair
Idaho

Ed Schriever
Idaho

Doug Grob
Montana

Mike Milburn
Montana



Northwest **Power** and **Conservation** Council

KC Golden
Vice Chair
Washington

Thomas L (Les) Purce
Washington

Ginny Burdick
Oregon

Louie Pitt, Jr.
Oregon

Council Meeting Summary **June 14, 2023** **at Victor, MT and via Webinar**

This is a summary of the Council's June public meeting and the actions the Council decided upon. The meeting agenda and presentation materials for each agenda item during the meeting are posted at <https://www.nwcouncil.org/calendar/council-meeting-2023-06-13/>. The meeting recording and a copy of this summary will also be posted on that page.

June 14, 2023

Council Chair Jeffery Allen brought the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. MT, Council Members Ginny Burdick, KC Golden, Doug Grob, Mike Milburn, Louie Pitt Jr., Thomas L (Les) Purce, and Ed Schriever were in attendance in Victor, MT. The next Council meeting is scheduled for July 11-12, 2023, in Portland, OR, and via webinar.

Reports from Committees Chairs and Executive Director

Fish and Wildlife Committee

Member Milburn, fish and wildlife committee chair, reported on the fish and wildlife committee meeting held on June 13, 2023.

1. Montana Resident Fish Mitigation Update

Council staff Kerry Berg introduced Matt Boyer, Hydropower Mitigation Coordinator, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, to present on coordinating the Hungry Horse Mitigation project. The project supports monitoring and research that are utilized to steer project execution, quantify progress, and advise future mitigation program direction. The goal is to understand, maintain, and enhance ecosystem integrity to conserve self-sustaining fisheries, native fish assemblages, and the habitats they occupy.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18338/2023_06_f1.pdf.

2. Presentation on Water Transactions in the Bitterroot Subbasin

Council staff Kerry Berg introduced Jeb Whiteley, Project Manager at Clark Fork Coalition, to present on the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program (CBWTP), which works through locally based entities to acquire water rights voluntarily from willing landowners. Using temporary and permanent water rights acquisitions and other incentive-based approaches, the CBWTP supports grantees to assist landowners who wish to restore flows to critical fish habitats voluntarily.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18337/2023_06_f2.pdf.

3. Update on Inter-Tribal Monitoring Data ITMD project of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Sheryn Olson from the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission spoke on the Inter-Tribal Monitoring Data (ITMD) project. The presentation covered the connection between ITMD resources and the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, as well as their availability, emerging tools and new technologies. Sheryn reviewed the history of the project, and each member tribes' data management accomplishments and challenges associated with the ITMD project.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18339/2023_06_f3.pdf.

4. Staff report on Regional Coordination Forum

The Fish and Wildlife Division staff highlighted the May 2023 Regional Coordination Forum (RCF) meeting. The meeting's agenda included discussions on the project review process, an update on the Governor's Report, a discussion on flat funding and inflation challenges associated with Bonneville's direct fish and wildlife program budget,

and other topics. The RCF is an essential platform for the Council to engage with fish and wildlife managers and address regional issues within the Fish and Wildlife Program.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18341/2023_06_f4.pdf.

Power Committee

Member Grob, power committee chair, reported on the power committee meeting held on June 13, 2023.

1. BPA Resource Program Update

Ryan Egerdahl, Manager of Long Term Power Planning at Bonneville Power Administration, provided an overview of the ongoing Resource Program. The Resource Program examines the system's needs and available resources to inform Bonneville's resource acquisition strategies, consistent with the Council's power plans. Ryan discussed the program's timing in relation to post-2028 contract negotiations with customers, as well as anticipated analysis and changes in approach. The current version of the Resource Program is set to be completed in the fall of 2024.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18346/2023_06_p1.pdf.

2. NorthWestern Energy Resource Planning

Steven Schmitt and Matt Stajcar from NorthWestern Energy (Montana Operations) discussed the company's submission of an electricity supply resource plan to the state regulatory commission every 2 to 3 years. These plans are critical in informing resource management decisions in order to ensure a reliable and affordable electricity supply for all customers.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18342/2023_06_p2.pdf.

3. Representatives from Montana Co-op Utilities Presentation and Discussion

General Managers and Trustees from Montana electric cooperative utilities discussed the current issues in Montana that their electric utilities and customers were facing.

Among their concerns is the critical need for reliable power, especially during long winter cold spells in Montana.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18343/2023_06_p3.pdf.

Public Affairs Committee

Member Louie Pitt Jr., public affairs committee chair, reported on the public affairs committee meeting held on June 9, 2023.

Member Pitt Jr. reported on an update of the planned congressional staff tour that will be held in Montana. The tour aims to allow Congress staff to learn about the Council's activities and priorities. Member Pitt Jr. highlighted other topics discussed in the committee meeting.

Executive Director Report

Council's Executive Director, Bill Edmonds, expressed his gratitude to Ravalli Electric and their staff for hosting the June Council meeting. Edmonds highlighted the BPA asset management presentation regarding capital investments to hatcheries and fish screens and the contract for the new load forecast model.

Council Meeting Agenda Items

1. Council Decision: Asset Management Strategic Plan priorities for FY 2024 for hatcheries and screens

Council's Project Review and Implementation Manager, Mark Fritsch joined by Jason Sweet, Andy Traylor, Eric Leitzinger, from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to present the asset management strategic plan priorities for 2024 and outlined an annual process where nonrecurring maintenance needs are identified for the screen and hatcheries to ensure that funds can be directed to the projects. Fritsch provided a brief summary of the NPPC Asset Management Strategic Plan approved in 2018 and the BPA Strategic Asset Management Plans (SAMPs) that was initiated for hatcheries in 2020. Traylor covered the complementary asset plan at BPA, which are updated every two years and usually covers 10 years of strategic plan.

Sweet presented information on the Revenue Distribution Clause (RDC) funds which were made available per the 2022 rate case. As a result, Bonneville's Administrator allocated \$50 million to address non-recurring maintenance needs in fish and wildlife

assets to be split between Fish and Wildlife Program hatcheries and the Lower Snake River Compensation Program (LSRCP) Hatcheries. Approximately half of the RDF funds will be integrated into the established Bonneville/Council prioritization process with the remainder supporting the LSRCP hatcheries. Funding from BP24 rate case are being used to supplement the Asset Management Placeholder for the Programs' fish screens.

Staff presented the recommendations from the Asset Management Subcommittee and the Council's Fish and Wildlife Committee. The recommendation was to fund the nonrecurring maintenance for Fish and Wildlife Programs of fish screens in FY 2024 at \$1,607,300 and for hatcheries in FY 2024 at \$23,356,074, respectively.

Chair Allen expressed gratitude for the effort put into the asset management program and inquired about the sustainability of long-term funding. Fritsch said that the funds would put the asset plan implementation ahead of the curve and expressed hope that addressing significant investments now would help mitigate future costs. Members asked about the expected lifespan of the chillers, and the presenter said that chillers typically have a life expectancy of 30 to 50 years. In addition, Member Schriever inquired about the inclusion of personnel and indirect costs. Traylor answered that an estimated 90% of the costs will go to the assets and the work will be scheduled carefully to fit into the hatchery fish production schedules.

Vice Chair Golden moved that the Council approve the request from the Asset Management Subcommittee and Fish and Wildlife Committee for nonrecurring maintenance for Fish and Wildlife Program fish screens and hatcheries in FY2024 at \$1,607,300 and \$23,356,074, respectively as presented by Staff.

Member Burdick seconded.

Discussion: Member Schriever sought clarification regarding the disparity between the amounts of \$19,996,074 noted in the tables included on the slides and \$23,356,074 noted in the decision memo. Fritsch provided an explanation, stating that the latter figure includes the contingency amount.

Voice vote – all in favor, none opposed.

Motion was approved.

Presentation materials are at: https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18345/2023_06_1.pdf.

2. Update on Klickitat Hatchery master plan

Mark Fritsch, Council's Project Review and Implementation Manager, introduced Bill Sharp, Klickitat coordinator; Joe Blodgett, project manager, Yakama Nation Fisheries, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN); and Mary Todd Haight, fish and wildlife administrator, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to provide an overview of the near final design and agreements associated with the Klickitat Spring Chinook Master Plan (MP) prior to construction implementation. This update was requested in the prior Council decision on this project.

Blodgett provided opening remarks. Then Sharp presented on the Klickitat Hatchery located near Glenwood, WA, on the Yakama Reservation. He discussed the Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project, which was established in 1982 to address uncertainties related to hatchery supplementation and ecological interactions. Sharp provided an overview of the facility's history, current segregated harvest programs, conservation objectives, and strategies for hatchery reform and habitat restoration. He mentioned the different native, introduced fish stocks, and highlighted past and present infrastructure improvements.

Haight shared the integrated spring chinook salmon master planning timelines, milestones, and information on the environmental compliance process, as well as the potential impacts of capital upgrades. The estimated timeline for the award and construction phase was 18 months. Sharp returned to discuss the capital construction overview, emphasizing plans and how the work is being completed. He mentioned that the fish would remain in the station during the construction process and provided an overview of the project plans.

Chair Allen inquired about the subsequent steps for the project. In response, Fritsch confirmed that the next phase would involve commencing construction. This update satisfied the Council request for a report for this stage of construction.

Presentation materials are at: https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18344/2023_06_2.pdf.

3. Update on Council letter regarding Double Crested Cormorants in the Columbia River Estuary

Patty O'Toole, Fish and Wildlife Division Director and Kate Self, Fish and Wildlife Program Scientist presented an update on the response to the Council's letter to the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation regarding Double Crested Cormorants on the Astoria-Megler Bridge in the Columbia River estuary.

O'Toole provided information on the Council's predator management strategy for context. O'Toole explained that in November, the Council received an update on the impact of double-crested cormorants in the Columbia River estuary. The presentation highlighted the shift of the breeding colony from East Sand Island to the Astoria-Megler Bridge and upriver locations. This shift, caused by reducing cormorant numbers on the island, may be leading to higher predation rates on juvenile salmonids. The Council sent a letter in January to the Oregon and Washington departments of transportation, requesting a joint presentation to address their concerns and mitigation efforts regarding the bridge.

O'Toole informed that the Council received a response on behalf of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). ODOT and WSDOT will conduct a value engineering study during the summer to develop solutions aimed at reducing cormorant usage of the bridge. The study will involve a multidisciplinary team meeting over four days to explore various potential actions. ODOT has extended an invitation to the Council to nominate a representative for the study team or stakeholder panel. Additionally, ODOT and WSDOT plan to deliver a joint presentation at a future Council meeting after the completion of the study. The presentation, anticipated to take place in the fall, will offer an overview of the challenges posed by the cormorant colony on Astoria-Megler and the potential solutions derived from the value engineering study.

Member Allen inquired about the Council's role in ensuring full participation. O'Toole responded that the Council can leverage its position to encourage broad engagement, involving federal agencies and tribal members in the conversation. Member Allen suggested writing a letter and informing stakeholders across the region. Member Milburn raised the question of population reduction. O'Toole explained that the birds have legal protection, although some permits are available. Member Schriever, with experience in predation management, acknowledged the growing issue and highlighted the efforts of working groups in advancing knowledge and measures to address the conflict between birds and fish. Member Pitt Jr. emphasized the need for the Council to maintain a coordinated regional approach over time, incorporating adaptive management principles and ensuring the team remains committed to the cause without giving up prematurely. O'Toole responded that the staff will prepare a draft letter as requested and will circulate to members via email for their approval.

Presentation materials are at: https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18333/2023_06_3.pdf.

4. Regional Technical Forum 2022 Annual Report

Laura Thomas, Regional Technical Forum (RTF) Manager updated the Council about the RTF's activities from the previous year and provide a preview of the ongoing work in the current calendar year.

Thomas provided a comprehensive update on the RTF during the meeting. She highlighted the origins of the RTF, which was formed in 1999 as an advisory committee to the Council, following Congress' directive in 1996. The RTF consists of 20-30 individuals representing various technical expertise and perspectives, including engineers, evaluation experts, and program implementers from public utilities, IOUs, and national labs. They convene monthly to consider analysts' recommendations and provide individual expertise rather than representing their respective organizations.

Thomas outlined the key functions of the RTF, including the development and maintenance of a measure library with savings, lifetime costs, and estimated value to the power system. The RTF also analyzes the demand response potential of technologies that offer energy efficiency benefits and provides analytical support. Thomas emphasized that the RTF's work is publicly available and widely utilized. Utility programs rely on RTF data for planning, implementation, and evaluation purposes, while regulators value its unbiased perspective and encourage the use of RTF measures.

Regarding funding, Thomas noted that the RTF receives financial support from entities such as BPA and regional utilities. The RTF Policy Advisory Committee plays a crucial role in securing funding for the RTF. Thomas also shared highlights from the RTF's work in 2022, including the enhancement of the measure portfolio and library, expansion of the RTF's reach, and progress in advancing the 2021 Power Plan recommendations. The RTF has also focused on improving tools, such as developing a Residential Demand Response and Energy Efficiency Modeling tool for simulation modeling.

Looking ahead, Thomas outlined the future work of the RTF, which includes continued focus on Power Plan recommendations, specifically expanding demand response and energy efficiency interaction in measure work and improving measure load profiles. The RTF is also exploring the potential for an efficient electric vehicle measure through market characterization.

Chair Allen, Member Schriever, and Member Grob highlighted various aspects of the discussion, with a particular emphasis on how the RTF's can help address the barriers to efficiency in rural areas. Jennifer Light, the Council's Director of Power Planning, responded by noting that this is a long-standing conversation in the region and while the

RTF can help address some of the challenges, most are outside of the RTF wheelhouse as they relate to implementation and other considerations. Member Golden emphasized the role of electrification and how the RTF contributes to advancing efficiency. In response, Light clarified that the RTF primarily focuses on technical issues and is not a policy-making body, so addressing electrification would best be addressed through the Council and then the RTF could follow suite.

Presentation materials are at:

https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18340/2023_06_5.pdf.

5. Grid United Regional Transmission

Member Grob introduced Brant Johnson from Grid United to present the current status and overview of The North Plains Connector project. This project involves the construction of an approximately 385-mile, up to 525-kilovolt High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) transmission line connecting the eastern and western electric grids in Montana and North Dakota. The alternating current portions of the project will be 345 kV and will link the converter stations to the local grids. The North Plains Connector will accommodate various sources of electrical power generation and have bidirectional power transportation capabilities.

Johnson provided a detailed overview of the project planning process, emphasizing the incorporation of stakeholder input and analysis of various constraints. The route refinement was undertaken in collaboration with federal, state agencies, and local officials, with the aim of minimizing the need for eminent domain and ensuring flexibility within the program. To engage with affected landowners and elected officials, the project organized 12 open houses. Notably, the project adopted a progressive approach by engaging with tribal communities early and consistently.

Johnson shared a project timeline and provided updates on the project's development status. Additionally, he highlighted the findings of a production cost modeling study, which demonstrated substantial wholesale market savings of nearly \$11 billion that could be achieved through the project. Currently, the project is in the planning and development phase. Grid United will actively engage with stakeholders, conduct a thorough analysis of the proposed project corridor, and finalize the route based on stakeholder input. Land rights will be acquired, and regulatory filings will be initiated, with approval anticipated in 2025. Construction will commence following regulatory approval, and it is estimated that the North Plains Connector could become operational as early as 2029.

Member Burdick expressed appreciation to the presenter for the extensive front-end work conducted and acknowledged the challenges faced in past efforts. She expressed amazement at the high approval rate of 95% in the surveys conducted. Member Grob commended the program's approach to their work. Member Golden inquired about the project's market needs in the Western region. Johnson explained the necessity of having a market in the West to support the project. Chair Allen asked about the national measures required to expedite the completion of similar projects. Johnson emphasized the significance of stakeholder engagement and the time it takes to ensure thorough work and environmental protection. Member Pitt Jr. expressed gratitude to the presenter for considering the perspectives of tribal communities.

Presentation materials are at:

https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18334/2023_06_4.pdf.

6. Council Business

Approval of May 2023 Council Meeting Minutes

Member Golden moved that the Council approve for signature of the vice chair the minutes of the May 2023 Council Meeting, held at Wenatchee, WA and via webinar as presented by staff.

Member Schriever seconded.

No discussion.

Voice vote – all in favor, none opposed.

Motion was approved.

The approved minutes of the May 2023 Council meeting and other materials from that meeting are at https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18336/2023_06_6minutes.pdf.

Council decision authorize contract for development of new load forecast model

Moved the Council authorization to contract with ITRON Inc. for professional services, software licensing and maintenance to support current and future demand forecasting efforts at the Council in an amount not to exceed \$399,790 for fiscal year 2023 and 2024 as presented by staff.

Member Grob seconded.

No discussion.

Voice vote – all in favor, none opposed.

Motion was approved.

Materials are at: https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18335/2023_06_6demand.pdf.

Public Comments

No public comments

Chair Allen adjourned the meeting at 10:09 a.m. Mountain Time