

Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Regional Coordination Forum
Portland, Oregon
December 15, 2016

DRAFT MEETING NOTES

ATTENDEES:

Jennifer Anders NPCC-MT
Guy Norman NPCC-WA
Tony Grover NPCC
Lynn Palensky NPCC
Mark Fritsch NPCC
Leslie Bach NPCC
Patty O'Toole NPCC
Nancy Leonard NPCC
Laura Robinson NPCC
Erik Merrill NPCC
Kerry Berg NPCC-MT
Stacy Horton NPCC-WA
Karl Weist NPCC-OR
Bryan Mercier BPA
Greg Sieglitz NOAAF
Michael Garrity WDFW
Tucker Jones ODFW
Bob Rose YN

Tom Iverson YNF, CRITFC
Dianne Barton CRITFC
Rudy Salakory Cowlitz Tribe
Ray Entz Kalispel Tribe
Ted Night Spokane Tribe
DR Michele UCUT
Bob Austin USRT
Jen Bayer PNAMP
Steve Martin SRSRB
Mary Sutton Carruthers UCSRB
Heath Heikkila Coastal Conservation
Association
Scott Donahue BPA
Lawrence Schwabe CTGR
Lance Hebdon IDFG
Matt Boyer MFWP

Introduction:

Welcome by Council Members Guy Norman, and Jennifer Anders

Agenda Item 1: Cost Savings Workgroup

(Palensky, Grover, Mercier, Donahue)

The Cost Savings Workgroup (CSW) implements language on page 116 of the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program. The workgroup has identified approximately \$651,915 in savings to date and has recommended the use of \$100,000 for a habitat assessment above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams and \$40,000 for Lake Roosevelt northern pike control efforts. An additional \$200,000 will be dedicated to address unmet, one time, needs identified in the Hatchery O&M Assessment. The list of hatchery needs should be available in January. This leaves approximately \$310,000 for re-allocation.

The NPCC and BPA will be releasing a Request for Information (RFI) for potential one-time 2017 sturgeon and lamprey actions to expend the remaining \$310,000 of cost savings for FY2017. The RFI will allow existing projects to expand their work or will support a follow up Request for

Proposals (RFP), depending on the responses received. The NPCC intends to solicit information on cold water refuges, as well, once they can narrow the scope of that work. The RFI should be released in early 2017.

The CSW provided their report to the F&W Committee at the December meeting on the outcomes of the October 13 RRS Workshop held on. 1) The NPCC proposes to coordinate an annual RRS meeting to facilitate further knowledge sharing between project sponsors to improve and advance this body of work. 2) The workgroup found that the USFWS Abernathy Creek RRS study (Project #2003-063-00) was unable to meet its study design and will be provided a “smart” close out, saving the Program approximately \$500,000 once the project has been completely closed. BPA anticipates approximately three years to close out the project. 3) BPA is meeting with ODFW to restructure their Deschutes river RRS study. Cost savings identified from the RRS projects will be placed in the CSW placeholder for distribution on emerging priorities.

Agenda Item 2: Temperature Modeling and Cold Water Refuges

(Palensky, Bach)

The mid-Columbia PUDs are working on temperature modeling for their portion of the Columbia River. NPCC staff is pushing for 3D models for the entire river versus 2D models focused at the dams. There is a lot of regional interest in temperatures due to the 2015 drought, the CRITFC FOOS Floodplain Conference, and general climate change planning across the Basin. The NPCC have received several presentations on temperatures and cold water refuges over the past year. It is most reasonable to break them down into three geographic areas – mainstem, tributary and headwaters. Mainstem – The Corps is supposed to be working with mid-C PUDs on Columbia mainstem, and also on Snake River temperature modeling. The Corps may need additional encouragement to get them to proceed. They are accumulating data but may not have funds to perform the actual modeling. Mainstem modelling is probably the priority because if we can't get fish through the mainstem, the tributary refuges won't matter as much.

Tributary/headwaters: Work is being done on the Willamette to map cold water refuges. There is discussion about what constitutes a refuge (temperature variance) and how fish use them. We know each species uses cold water areas differently.

Agenda Item 3: O&M Subgroup

(Fritsch, Mercier)

Link: <https://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/om-subcommittee/>

The 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program included an investment strategy which identified long-term maintenance of past investments as the highest Program priority. NPCC and BPA have been developing an O&M plan for three categories of capital projects; hatcheries, fish screens, and lands.

NPCC and BPA have conducted an assessment of all BPA-funded hatchery facilities over the past year. The final report will identify mission critical elements and other unmet needs at each facility. The assessment has focused on how to maintain existing benefits from investments not

expansion or modification of the actual production programs. The report should be available in January/February and will identify potential one time investments for infrastructure. The NPCC and BPA will use approximately \$200,000/year of the CSW placeholder to begin addressing these unmet needs.

NPCC and BPA have been working with the Fish Screen Oversight Committee (FSOC) to conduct a general assessment of approximately 1,100 screens across the Basin. The screens have been identified and located on a map. Next, the group will assess the roles and responsibilities for the projects, and consider what funding is needed and who is responsible for funding. An assessment template has been developed by FSOC and will be piloted in Idaho in Jan/Feb. It is anticipated that the assessment template will be applied across the rest of the Basin in 2017.

NPCC and BPA will kick off the [wildlife project review](#) at the beginning of 2017. As part of this review, wildlife lands will be reviewed for long term O&M requirements. Project leads will work with COTRs to complete a condition and needs assessment form to support their project review.

Agenda Item 4: Research Plan

(O'Toole)

Link: https://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/am/research/update_research/

The F&W Committee has agreed to move the current draft Research Plan to full Council in January for their review. The NPCC may decide to send it out for a 45 day public review and comment period in the next month or two. The current draft is a guidance document not a decision document. It will not review projects or determine project funding. According to a staff memo, the Plan describes its directive and purpose, identifies research themes and uncertainties associated with those themes, highlights priority areas for immediate research review, identifies areas of emerging research priorities and describes implementation of research using administrative and science and policy reviews and reporting requirements.

Updating the research plan is a good opportunity to refresh the Program's critical uncertainties consistent with the recent [ISAB report](#). NPCC staff suggests using the plan to tee up important questions to be addressed in project reviews and science policy workshops in the future.

Agenda Item 5: Regional Aquatic Habitat Indicator Project (RHIP)

(Leonard, Bayer)

Link: <https://www.pnamp.org/project/3149>

The Regional Habitat Indicators Project is a task identified by the PNAMP Steering Committee to identify a few key indicators for monitoring aquatic habitat. This aligns with the NPCC's effort to identify some high-level indicators for their HLI Website. The goal is to understand what management questions are important to organizations throughout the Pacific Northwest in order to focus discussions about indicators, data, and data sharing. Ultimately, improving indicator data compatibility and accessibility. The result is a voluntary alignment of monitoring to feed various indicator reporting mechanisms. The current focus is on Flow, Macro-invertebrates, Stream Temperature, and Water Quality. The work group identified three main

management questions for each category of indicators and will now begin working on selecting common indicators to support/address the questions. A workshop will be conducted in May 2017 to match targets with indicators.

Agenda Item 6: Alignment of M&E Tools

This was a suggested topic from the pre-meeting survey. No one was prepared to discuss for this meeting. NPCC may consider a workshop to discuss CHAMP, ISEMP, AEM and Life Cycle modeling in the spring.

Agenda Item 7: Blocked Area Mitigation

(Robinson, DR Michel)

Link to Program language on [Anadromous fish mitigation in blocked areas](#)

Salmon and steelhead passage above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams was identified as a priority in the 2014 Program. The UCUT member tribes and the UCUT organization are implementing various assessments for salmon and steelhead above those dams to address Phase 1 of the NPCC's strategy. The Spokane Tribe and Colville Tribe are conducting tributary habitat assessments in the US portion of the blocked area. The Colville Tribe is conducting a donor stock assessment for chinook, coho, and sockeye salmon and a disease risk assessment. UCUT is developing a life cycle model for possible reintroduction scenarios. The NPCC staff have completed a [review](#) of adult and juvenile fish passage technologies, which will be posted on the Council's website for use by the region by the end of 2016. Upon completion of all of these objectives a report will be provided to NPCC in 2017.

Based on what is determined by the assessments above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee in the Council's Phase I, the region may decide to proceed to Phase 2 which is to test reintroduction opportunities and design and develop facilities for reintroduction. A key point from the NPCC staff white paper is that each passage project is unique and will require specific testing and development. Should the design and testing of passage facilities be pursued for the Upper Columbia, many studies will be necessary to determine what type of passage is most applicable to the area. Additionally, information on emerging technologies as they are used and improved could be helpful in determining the best passage type.

Bob Austin provided an update on the Hells Canyon Complex relicensing efforts. Idaho Power Company has petitioned FERC to preempt OR state law that requires fish passage at re-licensing facilities. Bob believes this will be a non-starter and expects significant push back by the tribes and the State of Oregon, likely in Jan or February of next year.

Agenda Item 8: NOAA Regional Partnership

(Sieglitz)

Link: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac/>

The Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) and NOAA Fisheries have established the new Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBP Task Force). According to NOAA, the challenge

of protecting, restoring, and effectively managing our salmon and steelhead is so great, it warrants a more comprehensive and integrated approach to crafting common goals for both listed and non-listed Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead. The CBP Task Force will be making recommendation on common goals and helping to define a shared path to long-term salmon recovery. The Task Force will recommend a shared vision for Columbia Basin salmon and quantitative goals to meet conservation needs and provide harvest opportunities. These goals will be developed in the context of habitat capacity, climate change, and other factors that affect natural production.

The first meeting of the CBP Task Force will be on January 24-25, 2017 in Portland.

Membership and additional info can be found here:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/columbia_river/CBP_2017_membership.html

- Primary purpose of task force is to help establish conservation and harvest goals for salmon and steelhead.
- The task force has about 30 members-- sovereigns and stakeholders.
- First task force meeting will be in Portland Jan 24-25.
- The meeting is open to the public.

The Partnership is comprised of a broad list of interest groups. Meeting is open to the public. The effort will rely heavily on the NPCC biological objectives mapping tool. Data that supports that tool is out for review. The tool will go live in time for workshop.

Agenda Item 9: CRSO NEPA Hearings

(Grover)

Link: <http://www.crso.info/>

Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) NEPA scoping meetings began on Oct 24. The final meeting scheduled for Astoria has been postponed twice but will occur the week before Christmas, most likely. In this EIS, the three agencies will present a reasonable range of alternatives for long-term system operations and evaluate the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts on flood risk management, irrigation, power generation, navigation, fish and wildlife, cultural resources, and recreation. The Action Agencies will serve as joint-lead agencies in developing the EIS. The comment period closes on Jan 17, 2017. The Action Agencies have determined it will cost \$40 million to conduct review. The effort is draining lots of personnel resources, so the AAs are looking for cooperating agencies to help with the financial burden.

NPCC is going to submit 2014 FW Program and 2016 Power Plan as a comment. There is a chance that public comment period will be extended.

Agenda Item 10: Status Report on Quagga Mussel Prevention

(Leslie Bach)

The USCOE provided a status report on the federal cost share funds to support watercraft inspection stations to the NPCC this week. Each of the northwest states have established watercraft inspection and decontamination stations through the region to prevent the introduction, dispersal, and establishment of invasive mussels in waters of the Columbia River. In 2014, Congress passed a new authorization for the COE that included provisions to give the COE legal authority to enter into cost sharing agreements with the states to establish and operate inspection stations. Funding was finally included in the COE FY2016 appropriation. To implement the funding, the COE needs to complete an evaluation in the form of a “letter report,” along with appropriate NEPA documentation (LR/EA). The LR/EA is nearly complete and under regional review. It will be submitted to headquarters in January and a public review of 25 days will follow. The COE hopes to have the authority in place to distribute funds prior to the “watercraft migration season,” approximately the end of February, however it may be as late as April, 2017.

A new version of WRDA was passed in early December 2016, and this legislation contains provisions that update and improve the Corps’ authorization. Specifically it allows for funding stations outside of the Columbia River Basin (but within the 4 NW states), and it eliminates any confusion around “existing” versus “new” stations. It also explicitly allows for monitoring of invasive mussels. This legislation has not yet been signed by the President, therefore the new language cannot be incorporated into the LR/EA. However, the Corps believes that the language in the LR/EA is broad enough to allow for those changes. That does not seem completely clear, and the Council will be providing comments regarding that aspect of the LR/EA.

The Corps is also working with the 4 states to determine how to establish cost-share agreements, including whether to cost-share directly with the states or to cost-share with a single entity that represents all 4 states.

Agenda Item 11: Regional Calendar

(Leonard)

NPCC staff is working on some ideas on how to develop and maintain a regional calendar on the NPCC website. They will coordinate with PNAMP and contribute meeting information that they help organize.

Agenda Item 12: Other issues

- The next Ocean Forum meeting will occur on January 19, 2017.
- The NPCC will be reviewing Umbrella Projects starting in February see [webpage](#). The Umbrella projects pass-through habitat funding projects and include: Project #1992-026-01: Grande Ronde Model Watershed; Project #2010-077-00: Tucannon River Programmatic Habitat; Project #2010-001-00: Upper Columbia Programmatic Habitat; Project #2003-011-00: Columbia River Estuary Habitat Restoration; Project #2009-012-

00: Willamette Bi-Op Habitat Restoration; Project # 2009-397-00: John Day Habitat Flow and Habitat Enhancement

- Comments are due on NOAA's Draft Eulachon Recovery Plan by December 19, 2016.

Link:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/eulachon/pacific_eulachon.html

- Comments are due on NOAA's Snake River spring/summer Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan by February 9, 2017.

Link:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/recovery_planning_and_implementation/snake_river/snake_river_spring_summer_chinook_steelhead.html

Next Meeting:

The next Regional Coordination Forum meeting will occur on Monday May 15, 2017 in Boise, Idaho preceding NPCC meeting. Check [here](#) for updates.