

**Columbia Basin Collaborative
Hydropower/Blocked Areas Work Group**

Tuesday January 17, 2023 from 12:00pm – 3:00pm PT/1:00pm - 4:00pm MT

Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Work group members in attendance: Adam Storch (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Andrew Gingerich (Douglas County Public Utility District), Billy Joe Kieffer (Spokane Tribe of Indians), Bob Lessard (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission), Casey Baldwin (Colville Tribes), Chris Donley (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Claire McGrath (Bureau of Reclamation), Conor Giorgi (Spokane Tribe of Indians), Dan Rawding (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), David Bain (Orca Conservancy), David Doeringsfeld (Port of Lewiston), Dennis Daw (Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation), Eric Rothwell (Bureau of Reclamation), Erick Van Dyke (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Haley Ohms (Trout Unlimited), Jay Hesse (Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resource Management), Jennifer Riddle (Tidewater Transportation and Terminal), Jerry Rigby (Rigby, Andrus & Rigby Law, PLLC), Jim Chandler (Idaho Power Company), John Simpson (Idaho Water Users), Jonathan Ebel (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Keely Murdoch (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Lance Hebdon (Idaho Fish and Game), Leslie Druffel (McGregor Company), Mark Martin (Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association), Megan Kernan (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Michael Garrity (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Mitchell Cutter (Idaho Conservation League), Norman Semanko (Quincy-Columbia Basin Irrigation District), Ritchie Graves (National Marine Fisheries Service), Scott Hauser (Upper Snake River Tribes), Steve Manlow (Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board), Tim Copeland (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries)

Observers in attendance: Alan Kelsch (Idaho Water Users), Anna Brady (Attorney for Colville Tribes), Brooke Moore (Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District), Cathy Kellon (Northwest Power & Conservation Council), Dennis Rohr (DRohr & Associates, Inc.), Elaine Harvey (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Erich Hester (United States Department of Energy), Heather Nicholson (Public), Jeffrey Kallstrom (Snohomish County Public Utility District), Liz Fortunato (Desimone Consulting Group), Lytle Denny (Shoshone-Bannock Tribes), Scott Levy (Bluefish.org), Stacy Horton (Northwest Power & Conservation Council), Stuart Crane (Yakama Nation Water Resources Program), Steven Pfeiffer (Idaho Rivers United), Ted Knight (Attorney for Spokane Tribe of Indians)

Facilitation team: Samantha Meysohn (Kearns & West) and Colin Johnson (Kearns & West)

Welcome, Agenda Review, and Updates

Samantha Meysohn, Kearns & West, welcomed the work group members, provided the meeting guidelines, and reviewed the meeting agenda. Agenda topics included: 1) Blocked Areas – Actions to Address Needs, 2) Hydropower – Actions to Address Needs, 3) Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary.

Blocked Areas – Actions to Address Needs

The previous meeting saw the formation of small groups tasked with developing recommendations for addressing tier-one needs in the Blocked Areas. These recommendations were to be defined further

using the Recommended Actions Form. Representatives from each small group were invited to summarize and share the recommendations with the broader work group.

Need 1: Funding for Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT) Phase 2 Implementation Plan (P2IP)

Group members shared the recommendation to **Fully fund the Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT) Phase 2 Implementation Plan (P2IP) to provide fish passage at five hydroelectric dams on the upper Columbia and Spokane rivers and reintroduce anadromous fish to historically occupied habitats**. It was clarified that two documents were developed regarding the need to fund the UCUT P2IP. The first document identified potential funding sources for the P2IP, and the second document is the recommended action form for full programmatic funding for the P2IP.

Group members discussed the following comments and questions:

- Members from the small group shared that execution of the P2IP would require the completion of over a dozen substantive regulatory processes. To the extent possible, the group seeks to identify pathways to complete regulatory processes as efficiently as possible.
- Group members were encouraged to review Appendix A in the P2IP which outlines how funding would be spent at a programmatic level.
- Regarding the procedure for submitting a recommendation to the I/RG on behalf of the work group, members shared that organizational affiliations are an important consideration regarding what they are able to support;
 - Samantha reviewed the procedure that recommendations will undergo once they are submitted to the I/RG.
- Colville Tribes and Bonneville Power Administration are discussing lingering policy issues that currently prevent the use of fish from Chief Joseph hatcheries. Utilization of these stocks will be an important component of P2IP success.
- Regarding the Policy Recommendations listed under Summary of Action in the Recommended Action Form, one group member suggested striking the use of “adequate funding” for recommendations C and D in order to emphasize “alleviating regulatory burdens”.

Samantha invited members to consider next steps for sharing this recommendation given that there may be different levels of familiarity with it and that some members of the work group are involved in the ongoing Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service process.

- It is understood that certain entities may not be able to advocate for specific funding streams on behalf of this project. The recommendation was written to allow for flexibility in funding sources and emphasize the establishment of a path towards achieving a goal outlined by the Columbia Basin Partnership.
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Washington State Legislature show unified support for funding the P2IP and are advocating for it in this and other venues.
- Group members reviewed the funding opportunities pursued by UCUT for P2IP. It was noted that the pursuit of funding sources is extremely labor intensive and made challenging by competition with other, shovel-ready projects.

Samantha invited participants to discuss how this recommendation ties into other projects in the basin, and if there is language that could be added or modified to encourage broader support from agencies.

- It was noted that group members from federal agencies will likely need to discuss these recommendations internally to identify any perceived conflicts or reasons to withhold full support.
- The group will take another look at the recommendations and share comments and questions with UCUT.
 - One group member shared that Fish Passage Advisory Committee (FPAC) is another forum where participants may share support for this or other recommendations.
 - One group member questioned whether recommendations developed through consensus at the work group level would need to be advocated for at the Integration/Recommendations Group (I/RG) by members who work in both entities.
 - A group member suggested that the work group members think about what makes sense for recommendations from a technical perspective.
 - Work group members were reminded that the group is tasked with thinking about what is feasible from a technical as well as social and policy context.

The work group will take additional time to review the P2IP documents and recommendation before it is passed to the I/RG.

Need 2: Develop a recommendation to create a regional effort to address blocked areas above Hells Canyon.

Members summarized the discussion and outcomes from their meetings. Group members agreed that there are a multitude of questions on the Recommended Action Form that could not be answered at this time. The group discussed opportunities for future collaboration, and agreed on the importance of continuing this conversation. It was also decided that the conversations going forward should include an expanded roster of personnel from a diverse set of entities. It was recognized that with so many unanswered questions pertaining to this need, it may be more economical to focus on better defined issues. One group member added that dedicated sources of fish are essential to support studies that will tackle unanswered questions.

Samantha asked if continued meetings, or additional next steps need to happen regarding this recommendation.

- It was noted that future meetings for this topic should include an expanded group. A group member shared that they are currently putting together a list of who should join future meetings to discuss this need.
- A group member shared that the Upper Snake River Tribes are currently working on a loss assessment of the Upper Snake focused on Spring and Summer Chinook, using funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and will look at the Bruneau and Weiser rivers. A draft for the first two tributaries should be complete within the month and, if there is interest, members would be happy to discuss those findings in this forum.
- Group members discussed the value of developing a flow chart outlining regulatory issues and hurdles for addressing this issue.

- A group member shared that only some portions of the Recommended Action Form serve the group's needs, and that other parts are difficult to complete with certainty given the number of unknowns and challenges.
 - Working with a collection of private and federal dams adds complexity to the issue.
 - Group members would like to review the Recommended Action Form and identify areas where different questions may be more appropriate for developing an action to address this need.

Need 3: Increase funding to support addressing Blocked Areas impacts.

Group members shared support in prioritizing the funding of efforts to address Blocked Areas impacts and brainstormed potential avenues to identify relevant funding. It was also noted that this topic was being discussed and worked on in other forums. The work group members suggested sending this need to the SIWG since the topic of funding cross-cuts the various threat categories.

Need 4: Understand the geographic areas, or tributaries, to focus on understanding the feasibility and potential of fish reintroduction in some blocked areas – ensuring that people understand the extent of potential future reliance on hatcheries.

One group member stated that successful efforts will require dedicated funding and fish stocks, as well as consistency. An important first step in any effort will be to identify whether a region supports dedicating resources to fish recovery. Group members identified additional geographies that have not yet been discussed; including the Similkameen River, Enloe Dam, and the Upper Deschutes. The question was also raised as to whether reintroduction efforts were appropriate above all blocked areas. The group discussed that it will be helpful to understand how reintroduction efforts would utilize hatcheries. The group expressed an interest in continuing to refine the need statement at future meetings.

Work group members developed the following ideas:

- Find dedicated funding and fish (donor stock assessment and life cycle modeling) to address this need.
- Learn from Portland Power and Light's efforts in assessing feasibility in the Blocked Areas as a potential example.
- Additional examples of reintroduction efforts to review include:
 - Lewis River
 - Cowlitz River Dam – Bryce Glaser and Thomas Buerhens are contacts for the Cowlitz Restoration & Recovery Project
 - Additional dams in Puget Sound

The following next steps were discussed for the completed Blocked Areas recommendations:

- Small groups will continue working on draft recommendations.
- Work group members will review the UCUT P2IP recommendation.
- The Hells Canyon small group will continue to meet and share updates once they are available.
- Share the need to increase funding to support addressing Blocked Areas impacts with the SIWG.
- The Blocked Area group will continue to work on Need 4 at the next work group meeting.

At this time the work group shifted focus from Blocked Areas to Hydropower.

Hydropower – Actions to Address Needs

The previous meeting saw the formation of small groups tasked with developing recommendations for addressing tier-one needs related to the Hydropower system. These recommendations were to be drafted using the Recommended Actions Form. Representatives from each small group were invited to summarize and share the recommendations with the broader work group.

Need 1: Fill data gaps regarding the current objectives for federal and non-federal dam operators and why aren't current agreements providing adequate protection for salmon? Understanding role of dam operations in recovery relative to other impacts.

A member of the small group reviewed three recommended actions to address three data gaps.

The first recommendation is to **measure and understand run timing and entry timing of natural origin juvenile salmon and steelhead from natal tributaries into the Columbia River so that spill and bypass operations can be adaptively managed to ensure safe passage routes for early migrants. Data could be collected through smolts traps, Passive Integrated Transponders (PIT) tag detection (barges or other) or in some cases mainstem bypasses and traps.**

A member of the small group reviewed the recommendation in full. Several work group members expressed support for the recommendation and the whole group was invited to review and comment on the action following the meeting. One group member shared that this data gap is currently being looked at by FPAC in the Upper Snake River, as well.

The second recommendation is to **improve mainstem smolt-to-adult return (SAR) data for upper Columbia Stocks – recommend juvenile and adult detection at Wanapum Dam and improved juvenile detection capabilities at McNary and Bonneville Dams.**

A member of the small group reviewed the recommendation in full. Another member provided additional context regarding reduction in PIT tag detection, stating that it is due to increased spill level in the spring and the current functionality of the bypass system at McNary Dam. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries has been considering how to address bypass system functionality as to not impact PIT detection.

The third recommendation is to **install PIT tag detection systems at all mainstem hydro-projects so that reach-based survival estimates can be generated throughout the Columbia and Snake River basins. Reach based survival estimates will allow for identification of survival bottlenecks which can then be addressed.**

A member of the small group reviewed the recommendation in full. Another group member shared that NOAA Fisheries have been discussing the need to replace the current strategy utilized in the Lower Columbia River to detect PIT tags. Potential detection ideas include scaling down the existing practice of towing a net with a PIT tag detector behind two large boats, partnering PIT tag detection systems with pile dikes in the estuary, as well as gaining detections from bird colonies.

Several work group members expressed support for the three recommendations drafted by the small group. Members were invited to share additional data gaps that should be addressed. The WDFW

offered to provide volunteers to help build these recommendations out further. A work group member also explained the methodology for developing loss estimates from avian predators.

Need 2: Meeting with stakeholders (electricity, flood control, irrigators, navigation, work group participants, owners of the barriers) to understand what would people like to see with salmon, educate people, and impacts on stakeholders to build consensus around ideas for operational changes.

The small group for this need reviewed the recommendation to **continue the Columbia Basin Partnership (CBP) while bringing the recommendations to a broader group of stakeholders**. This would be an extension of CBP which would extend into local areas and focus on listening and educating on reasons for reintroducing salmon. The small group plans to meet again, and request guidance on how best to focus and refine the task of this scale. Work group members were encouraged to review the recommended action form and prepare feedback and comments at the next meeting.

Need 3: Create an institutional system to achieve goals in the long term.

The small group working on this need was unable to meet prior to the work group meeting, but members did discuss challenges related to interjurisdictional coordination which makes the development of a single institutional system difficult.

Need 4: Modernize and fully fund detection work.

Work group members shared that the recommendations proposed for **Hydropower - Need 1** would address specific aspects of this action. One member highlighted the importance of defining how much detail the work group will get into. It was shared that a regional data gap is the cause of mortality within specific reaches, and there is not a recent evaluation of predation threats such as walleye. Work group members were asked to identify data gaps so that the appropriate detection needs can be better identified.

Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary

Samantha reviewed next steps for the work group. She thanked the group for their participation and confirmed the following action items:

Action Items

All: Please complete the feedback survey on the completed recommendations shared during the meeting.

All: Please complete the Hydropower/Blocked Areas Meeting 4 survey to share feedback on the meeting.

All: Please complete the Doodle Poll to schedule the Hydropower/Blocked Areas Meeting 5.

KW: Draft a meeting summary and circulate to the work group.

Next Steps for Initial Recommendations

Blocked Areas Small Groups:

- P2IP funding – All work group members review and share feedback via the survey
- Hells canyon – Convene comprehensive group to work on authorities/policy flowcharts and draft Recommended Action Form

- Increasing funding for blocked areas – KW to share with the SIWG
- Feasibility of reintroduction - Clarify and refine the language at the next meeting

Hydropower Small Groups:

- Understanding role of dam operations in recovery relative to other impacts - Keeley/Ritchie/WDFW - review the forms and finalize, share with the group for feedback
- Outreach to stakeholders - All work group members review and share feedback via the survey
- Institutional systems - Glen/Ritchie to meet and draft recommendations
- Data collection and monitoring – Identify additional data gaps at the next work group meeting

Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm PT/4:00pm MT