

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

Tuesday, February 21, 2023, from 1:00pm – 4:00pm PT/2:00pm - 5:00pm MT
Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Work group members in attendance: Adam Storch (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Andrew Gingrich (Douglas County Public Utility District), Billy Joe Kieffer (Spokane Tribe of Indians), Bob Lessard (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission), Brandon Weems (Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde), Casey Baldwin (Colville Tribes), Chris Donley (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Claire McGrath (Bureau of Reclamation), Conor Giorgi (Spokane Tribe of Indians), David Bain (Orca Conservancy), Dennis Daw (Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation), Erick Van Dyke (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Glen Spain (Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations), Haley Ohms (Trout Unlimited), Jay Backus (Port of Clarkston Commissioner), Jennifer Riddle (Tidewater Transportation and Terminals), Jerry Rigby (Rigby, Andrus & Rigby Law, PLLC), John Simpson (Idaho Water Users), Jonathan Ebel (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Kieran Connolly (Retired Bonneville Power Administration), Leslie Bach (Northwest Power and Conservation Council), Leslie Druffel (McGregor Company), Liz Hamilton (Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association), Megan Kernan (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Michael Garrity (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Norman Semanko (Quincy-Columbia Basin Irrigation District), Ritchie Graves (National Marine Fisheries Service), Scott Hauser (Upper Snake River Tribes), Tim Copeland (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), and Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries).

Observers in attendance: Anna Brady (Attorney for Colville Tribes), Aurele LaMontagne (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Dennis Rohr (DRohr & Associates, Inc.), Dirk Mendive (Office of Congressman Russ Fulcher), Elaine Harvey (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Heather Nicholson (Public), Ian Chane (Public), Mark Martin (Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association), Mitch Silvers (Office of Senator Mike Crapo’s Office), Stuart Crane (Yakama Nation Water Resources Program), and Steven Pfeiffer (Idaho Rivers United).

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) Feedback from the I/RG, 2) Blocked Areas – Actions to Address Needs, 2) Hydropower – Actions to Address Needs, 3) Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary.

Feedback from the I/RG

Samantha recapped key takeaways from the Integration/Recommendations Group (I/RG) meeting held on January 26, 2023. Recommendations from work groups should specify the geographic area, scope, scale, and timeline for each action. It is also important to link recommendations to the quantitative goals of the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBPTF). Work groups are encouraged to identify achievable actions during this first phase of recommendation development. The goal of achieving consensus for the work groups was also defined as producing recommendations that no members of the work group oppose passing on to the I/RG.

Blocked Areas - Actions to Address Needs

Since the previous meeting on January 17, 2023, members were invited to share comments and feedback on the developed recommendations to address needs in the Blocked Areas. Small groups working on each recommendation incorporated the feedback and discussed comments and questions with the work group.

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

Work group members discussed 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.** Small group members shared that some suggested edits were approved and incorporated, while in other cases rationale was provided in response to comments and feedback.

The following topics were discussed:

- Members shared that UCUT P2IP will not usurp control of U.S. v Oregon or Douglas County Public Utilities District hatcheries and does not seek to pull funding away from existing projects. Other work group members emphasized these assurances, offering the reminder that the goal of the Columbia Basin Partnership (CBP) is to take actions that will achieve recovery across all populations without taking away from existing efforts.
 - Group members discussed challenges created by a lack of resources and questioned whether a broader recommendation for increasing dedicated funding or easing access to funding for reintroduction efforts in the Columbia Basin could be beneficial.
- Group members shared concerns about the infrastructure at Chief Joseph Hatchery's and the capacity to support the needs of the P2IP, and members discussed softening language to leave room for other hatchery options while maintaining enough specificity in the recommendation to move it forward.
- Concerns were raised regarding current statutes that could limit access to the Chief Joseph Hatchery stocks of fish, and how varying levels of understanding in regard to these statutes could inhibit discussions between parties regarding the Hatchery's use for the P2IP.
- Language covering the intention to preserve existing hydropower operations was taken from the P2IP and added to the recommendation under Regulatory Processes or Policies Associated with the Action.

The Work Group reached consensus on moving the recommendation forward to the I/RG and Science Integration Work group (SIWG).

The work group discussed next steps for this, and other, recommendations once they are sent to the I/RG for review. Group members serving as part of the I/RG provided additional context around ongoing discussions regarding how best to advance recommendations to appropriate implementers once consensus is reached at the I/RG. The group was reminded that the process of advancing recommendations will be iterative and may see recommendations returned to the work group for further development.

Need 2: Development of a regional effort for the blocked areas about the Hells Canyon Complex

Samantha recapped that per the last work group meeting, the small group working on developing a recommendation for this need was set to develop a flow chart of the relevant policy and regulatory context, while also thinking through an expanded outreach process inclusive of other important stakeholders/decision makers.

Small group members shared that they have begun reaching out to different stakeholders and have heard interest in convening a group to discuss issues in the Upper Snake. Work has progressed on the development of a flow chart and group members can expect to see a draft within the next few weeks. Members of this group have been focused on submitting comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regarding the supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being carried out for the Hells Canyon Complex.

Additional Blocked Areas Needs

Samantha shared a virtual whiteboard with the list of blocked areas needs identified by the group thus far, broken down by geography. Group members were invited to share any specific geographic components of these identified needs in order to further refine possible approaches to addressing them and developing basin-wide recommendations.

Group members shared the following comments, suggestions, and questions:

- As a method for developing a broader geographic approach, the group can develop specific criteria, e.g. dams over a certain size, and look at potential recommendations for all blockages that meet those criteria.
- There are relatively “low hanging fruit” blocked area issues around the basin, such as supporting the Yakama Basin Integrated Plan, passage efforts, and solutions for the Enloe Dam in the Similkameen, that could be included in an early batch of recommendations.
- The group would need to decide if efforts would be focused on areas that have passage programs in place, areas that have no passage at all, or both.
- Group members suggested creating a basin-wide program that will provide funding opportunities for reintroduction efforts above blocked areas in the basin. This program would allow for a more unified voice to amplify basin needs and appeal to different funding and resources with greater efficacy.
 - Work group members shared that they would need to consider what this means for existing programs; and whether it would better function as a supplemental source of funding for programs.
 - One work group member cautioned that in promoting this idea, the group should develop a better understanding of the legal and policy considerations across the basin, so as to avoid inadvertently creating resistance to this idea out of concerns around the ability to access other sources of funding. A funding concept needs to be aware of the legal and policy landscape across the basin.

Samantha shared that the facilitation team will follow up with the work group to gain a better understanding of geographic-specific needs that exist among the designated areas, as well as “low hanging fruit” blocked area issues in those regions.

Hydropower - Actions to Address Needs

Since the previous work group meeting on January 17, 2023, work group members were invited to share comments and feedback on the developed recommendations to address needs related to the Hydropower system. Small groups working on each recommendation incorporated the feedback and discussed comments and questions with the work group.

Need 1: Improve data collection at federal and non-federal dams to identify why current agreements are not providing adequate protection for salmon and understand the role of dam operations in recovery.

During the last work group meeting, the group members building out the recommendation for this need identified three data gaps to address: Reach-based survival, Improved SAR data, and Natural Origin Run Timing. Group members shared responses to comments and the rationale behind elements of the recommendations.

Natural Origin Run Timing

Group members identified an existing decay in the ability to estimate reach survival. This is a result of increased spill at project sites which is preventing fish from passing over detectors. Therefore, a goal is to determine how juvenile survival rates are being impacted by project operations and other factors, within a reasonable margin. Wanapum Dam was proposed as a site to collect this data because the bypass is a surface passage route spillway detector. The structure is likely collecting 60-70% of the juveniles passing through that bypass, and so a detection system would have a large probability of detecting a large portion of the population. Using Wanapum would also provide better clarity regarding whether fish remain in reservoirs for several weeks while they grow or continue migrating immediately.

The data collected through this recommendation will serve to better identify migration periods, especially as temperatures change due to climate change.

Per the discussion, the following comments and edits were added to the recommendation:

- Sharpen language around this recommendation to clarify the intention to improve information for use in adaptive management.
- Consider developing boilerplate language to address that some fish may not have tags in them.
- In considering other dams, group members posited that an added benefit of having a better understanding of run timing in the Upper Columbia is for the purpose of water management.
 - Developing a better understanding of water management at Grand Coulee Dam would shed light on any downstream benefits for stocks.
- Data could have implications for other sectors, e.g. power, navigation, system-wide water management.
- Language was added to broaden the potential equipment used to gather data.

Work group members reached consensus on moving this recommendation forward once edits have been incorporated by the small group.

Reach survival/Improved SAR Data

In discussing rationale for the improvement of SAR data, group members explained that the data is useful in comparing upstream and downstream populations, identifying bottlenecks in the hydropower system, and assessing the unique problems fish face in those areas. The data will allow for the capture of changes in migration timing, and other climate change impacts. Group members identified significant overlap between the recommendations to “improve SAR data” and to better track “reach survival”, stating that while the data is different much of the same equipment and techniques can be utilized. The group decided to combine the two recommendations into one, and then recirculate the recommendation to the work group for review before sharing with the I/RG. The combined recommendation will be discussed at the next Hydropower/Blocked Areas meeting.

Need 2: Outreach to stakeholders

Group members noted that stakeholder engagement will be vital for any process in the basin across salmon recovery efforts. Group members shared the following suggestions, comments, and questions:

- It was suggested such an undertaking may be best supported by professionals with outreach expertise.
- Outreach efforts should be tailored to address the unique concerns of different regions.
- Several group members questioned whether the Hydropower/Blocked Areas work group was the best source to advance this recommendation, and whether it could be proposed to the I/RG as a response to an identified need from all work groups.

The work group achieved consensus on moving the recommendation forward to the I/RG, with an included acknowledgement that more work should be done by people with relevant expertise.

Need 3: Systems-wide approach to help hydropower achieve the long term CBP goals

Group members shared that they had not had a chance to meet and discuss this recommendation but stated that significant barriers exist towards developing such a systems-wide approach, specifically when considering the likelihood of voluntary relinquishment of authority over dam operations at the federal level. The importance of convening stakeholders to develop solutions for reintroduction in the Columbia River was reiterated and the group will continue to work on this recommendation.

Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary

Samantha recapped the group’s status regarding the remaining needs and outlined a process to focus on identifying a specific Hydropower/Blocked Areas need at each of the future meetings. Samantha suggested focusing on the **Need to understand the ways (methods, infrastructure) to improve downstream passage for juveniles and steelhead kelts and overshoots**. Members discussed resources to help bring the entire group up to speed on this issue in preparation for the discussion during meeting 6. Samantha shared additional next steps for work group and thanked work group members for their participation:

Next Steps:

- **All:** Please complete a brief Hydropower/Blocked Areas Meeting 5 survey to share feedback on the meeting by **end of day 3/2**
- **All:** Please complete this Doodle Poll with your availability for a March meeting by **end of day 3/2**. Let us know if you need more time or assistance completing the poll.
- **Blocked Areas:** Complete the survey to share geographically specific needs by **end of day 3/3**
- **KW:** Draft a meeting summary and circulate to the work group by **end of day 3/21**

Next Steps for Initial Recommendations

Blocked Areas:

- P2IP Funding – Casey to make minor edit, and K&W to send completed recommended action form to the SIWG and I/RG
- Hells Canyon – Small group to continue working on developing recommended action form
 - Small group to finalize authorities/policy flowchart within a few weeks

Hydropower:

- Data Gaps – Keely and Ritchie to incorporate edits to Natural Origin Run Timing recommended action form
 - K&W to send completed recommended action form to the SIWG and I/RG
- Data Gaps - Keely and Ritchie to combine Reach Survival and Improved SAR Data recommendations into one.
 - K&W will circulate to work group once combined
- Stakeholder outreach – K&W to send recommended action form to I/RG and emphasize importance of engagement for all recommendations.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm PT/5:00pm MT