

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

Monday, March 27, 2023, from 9:00am – 12:00pm PT/10:00am - 1:00pm MT

Meeting Summary

Attendees:

Work group members in attendance: Adam Storch (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Andrew Gingrich (Douglas County Public Utility District), Andrew Murdoch (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Billy Joe Kieffer (Spokane Tribe of Indians), 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), Jay Backus (Port of Clarkston Commissioner), Jennifer Riddle (Tidewater Transportation and Terminals), Jens Rasmussen (AgriNorthwest), John Simpson (Idaho Water Users), Jonathan Ebel (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Keely Murdoch (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Kieran Connolly (Retired Bonneville Power Administration), Leslie Bach (Northwest Power and Conservation Council), Leslie Druffel (McGregor Company), Megan Kernan (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Michael Edmondson (Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation), Michael Garrity (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Norman Semanko (Quincy-Columbia Basin Irrigation District), Paul Arrington (Idaho Water Users), Stephen Waste (United States Geological Survey), Tim Copeland (Idaho Department of Fish & Game), Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Tracy Bowerman (Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board)

Observers in attendance: Anna Brady (Attorney for Colville Tribes), Brian Bellgraph (Pacific Northwest National Laboratory), Dennis Rohr (DRohr & Associates, Inc.), Dirk Mendive (Office of Congressman Russ Fulcher), Erich Hester (United States Department of Energy), Heather Nicholson (Public), Kevin Malone (Public), Mark Martin (Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association), Michelle Mortimer (Rigby, Andrus & Rigby Law, PLLC), Ted Knight (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) Presentation on Steelhead Kelts and Overshoots, 4) Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary.

Blocked Areas – Actions to Address Needs

Samantha reviewed discussion items for Blocked Areas: Check-in on Hells Canyon recommendation development, learn about the legal/policy differences on blocked areas between states, basins, and discuss proposed plan for addressing geographic specific needs.

Members of the subgroup working on a recommendation to develop a regional effort for the blocked areas above the Hells Canyon Complex were invited to provide an update on this topic. A representative of the subgroup shared that conversations are ongoing regarding this topic and that determining the appropriate forum for this topic to be addressed is still a matter of discussion. It was suggested that this topic may be best addressed by a Snake River Technical Group subgroup that will need to be formed by Idaho Power.

Michael Garrity, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, provided a brief presentation on the legal and policy differences between states and basins as they relate to the management of blocked areas. The presentation focused on the states of Washington and Oregon, and which entities are responsible for fish passage at various dams. Mike Edmondson, Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation, provided a presentation on these topics as they relate to the state of Idaho, including the unique challenges facing the reintroduction of species. This presentation also provided a history of the progression of dam introduction in the region.

Following the presentations, work group members discussed the following topics and questions:

- Support was shared for increasing hatcheries production to support reintroduction efforts upriver of Hells Canyon.
 - Regarding whether listed or non-listed stocks would be reintroduced, it would depend on the program and consideration for which species will perform best in a given context.
 - Tribes would like to see full lifecycle populations in tributaries in the future.
 - Full lifecycle will be challenging due to numerous impassible structures and considerations around water quality and supply.
- Members stated that it will be important to engage the Bureau of Reclamation when discussing mitigation efforts for blockages in Idaho.
- Idaho Power have produced a robust historical archive of fish in their service area as part of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process.
- A future consideration for this group will be how to split and group different ‘asks’ in light of the variety of decision makers and governance processes for the different dams that may be candidates for recommendations.
 - This will require sensitivity to the subtleties of different FERC processes and Public Utility Districts (PUD) and may require a variety of tailored recommendations as opposed to one overarching recommendation.

Samantha reviewed the remaining needs for the Blocked Areas and outlined a next step that includes taking a geographic-specific look at what blockages exist, and what is the social and policy context tied to that blockage. From there, the group can work to identify what funding and resources are needed to address that blockage. Each month the work group will focus on a different blocked area, as they are identified by the Columbia Basin Partnership. A subgroup will be tasked with convening and answering five questions about the blocked area prior to the meeting. Those questions are:

- What are the blockages in this area (including non-hydro dams/ dams with less than 5MW)?
- Which entities and organizations are involved in managing this area?
- What policies govern this blockage/area?
- What are the social dynamics around this blockage?
- What actions could be taken to improve passage at this blockage (capturing associated costs)?

Samantha shared a survey for workgroup members to identify three blocked areas they have existing knowledge about, currently work in or are interested in working in. Upon completion of the survey, work group members shared the following feedback:

- Given potential limitations to capacity as additional forums begin ramping up workloads, members suggested relaxing the timeline in order to produce better results.
- Members suggested narrowing focus to specific subcategories and areas within the blocked areas.
- A [current geospatial database](#) of all blockages in the Columbia is available.

Samantha shared that the facilitation team will follow up with work group members who identified themselves as having knowledge or interest in the Columbia River tributaries. In June and July the group will shift their focus to the Willamette, and the facilitation team will convene to outline a work plan for meetings from August onwards.

Hydropower – Actions to Address Needs

Samantha reviewed discussion items for Hydropower: Discuss and build consensus on the Reach Survival/SAR data recommendation, hear updates on the institutional systems change concept, and brainstorm actions to address needs.

Group members reviewed the Reach Survival/Smolt-to-Adult Return (SAR) Data recommendation to determine whether the recommendation is ready to be sent to the Integration/Recommendations Group (I/RG). Members of the subgroup that combined the initial Reach Survival and SAR Data recommendations into one document highlighted areas for ongoing discussion. One important piece of the recommendation centered around recommending the inclusion of adult detection, in addition to juvenile detection, at Wanapum Dam. Disagreement about including adult detection focused on whether it was necessary due to detection capabilities at Rock Island Dam to the north and Priest Rapids Dam to the south of Wanapum Dam. Group members ultimately concluded that including adult detection would be cost-effective, would allow for a clean SAR data collection metric, serve as a backup in case detection methods at Rock Island Dam or Priest Rapids Dam were to fail, and would provide greater insight into what fish are doing between both dams.

Group members discussed the utility of using SAR data to assess survival through hydro projects. Members expressed that SARs provided a valuable tool for putting freshwater survival in context with marine survival, while other members shared concerns about variability by species and SAR efficacy in assessing the hydro system. A subgroup was formed to refine the recommendation and find a mutually agreeable way to frame the use of SAR data.

Group members concluded the Hydropower – Actions to Address Needs discussion by returning to the previously identified need of developing an institutional system-wide approach to change in the hydro system. Group members agreed that this topic fell outside the purview of the Hydropower/Blocked Areas work group, and it should instead be passed to a higher-level policy group such as the Science Integration Work Group (SWIG) or the I/RG.

Presentation on Overshoots

Samantha invited Andrew Murdoch, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, to share a presentation on Overshoots. The group had previously identified a need to understand the methods and infrastructure to improve downstream passage for juveniles, steelhead kelts, and overshoots. The presentation provided an explanation of what an overshoot is and why they occur. Andrew highlighted research conducted at Priest Rapids Dam which sought to estimate fallback abundance, overshoot abundance, and the annual proportion of overshoot steelhead that migrated successfully downstream of Priest Rapids Dam prior to spawning. Andrew explained the PIT tag methodology used to detect wild steelhead, and discussed the results of the study which found the abundance of wild steelhead overshoots at the Dam to be greater than any other population in the Upper Columbia River. Consequently, only a small portion of these overshoots are observed in spawning grounds. The data suggests there is a drop in PIT tagging in some populations which could impact the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of recovery efforts in the future and added that studies show surface passage routes are extremely effective at getting these fish downstream.

Work group members will begin a discussion of actions to address this issue during the next meeting.

Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary

Samantha thanked work group members for their efforts and shared additional next steps as well as topics to be discussed in the next meeting.

Action Items

- **Blocked Areas:** Prepare to discuss the Tributaries to the Columbia River blocked areas – Cowlitz and Lewis
- **All:** Please complete the feedback survey for Meeting 6.
- **All:** Prepare for next meeting on April 24th, 9am-12pm PT
- **KW:** Share presentations from Mike/Michael to the work group
- **KW:** Develop a meeting summary and circulate to the group

Next Steps for Initial Recommendations

KW: Pass along the institutional systems recommendation concept to the I/RG

Andrew G/Tim/Andrew M/Keely/Ritchie: Refine the Reach Based Survival/SAR data recommendation