

Columbia Basin Collaborative Predation Work Group

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, August 16, 2023 from 12:00 – 2:00pm PT/ 1:00 – 3:00pm MT

Attendees

Working Group Members in Attendance: Art Martin (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), David Bain (Orca Conservancy), Erik Neatherlin (Washington GSRO), Gary Marston (Trout Unlimited), Grant Waltz (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), James Lawonn (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Jay Hesse (Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Management), John Edwards (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Josh Ashline (Bonneville Power Administration), Lynne Krasnow (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Michael Brown (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Michelle Rub (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Sean Tackley (Army Corps of Engineers), Tim Copeland (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Trenton De Boer (Yakama Nation Fisheries)

Observers in Attendance: Allan Martin (Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission), Doug Hatch (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission), Heather Nicholson, Jeanette Zamon (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Jessica Stocking (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Jerry Klemm (Port of Lewiston), Jerry Rigby (Rigby, Andrus & Rigby Law, PLLC), Kelsey Swieca (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Shay Valentine (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Stuart Crane (Yakama Nation), Tom Lorz (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission), Trevor Conder (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries)

Facilitation Team: Amira Streeter (Kearns & West), Angela Hessenius (Kearns & West), Grant Simmons (Kearns & West)

Welcome, Agenda Review, and Updates

Amira Streeter, Kearns & West, provided an overview of the agenda and meeting guidelines. The topics included: 1) Review and Consensus Building on Non-Lethal Pinniped Recommendation, 2) Review and Consensus Building on Pinniped Removal program Extension Recommendation, 3) Action Items and Upcoming Meeting Topics.

Before Amira introduced the Non-Lethal Pinniped Recommendation, she welcomed Art Martin, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, to give an update on actions that were taken after the Work Group came to consensus and the I/RG came to consensus to move the recommendations forward.

The Work Group briefly discussed a recent meeting between Washington Department of Transportation and Oregon Department of Transportation about future actions on the Astoria-Megler Bridge which included action involving the Double-crested cormorant recommendation concerning the bird population that is nesting on the bridge. Members at that meeting agreed that the Columbia Basin Collaborative was helpful in fostering this process.

Review and Consensus Building on Non-Lethal Pinniped Recommendation

Amira then introduced the Pinniped Subgroup to give an overview on the Non-Lethal Pinniped Recommendation. David Bain, Orca Conservancy, gave the overview of the recommendation. The Subgroup had not spent enough time on the recommendation and suggested that the Work Group review the recommendation together, ask questions, and inform the recommendation for the Subgroup to finalize.

The work group had the following input:

- Multiple members suggested discussing the recommendations further with the group before approving this recommendation to go to the I/RG.
- Multiple members noting issues with drone regulations and the need to develop this aspect of the recommendation more. One member noted that drones are currently used for monitoring pinnipeds and using them for hazing could result in interference with current monitoring efforts.
- One member emphasized the need to include traditional hazing methods in this recommendation, such as boat hazing and cracker shell methods. Another member noted that there the recent ODOT cormorant study asked for a fireboat to use high pressure water to deter bird nesting and a similar method/equipment could be used for pinnipeds.
- Members discussed acoustic deterrence as a potential hazing method. Members agreed on the need to lean on new research for acoustic deterrence methods. Multiple members noted that although acoustic deterrence can work in contained environments, it has never proven effective in an environment as large as complicated as the Columbia River.
- A couple members stated their belief that terrestrial carnivore reintroduction is unlikely to be effective and could face public opposition. One member suggested prioritizing existing haul out structures as the most actionable item and selecting key points for non-lethal deterrence methods.
- Members briefly discussed if advanced robotics like Boston Dynamics' devices could be used for hazing. One member pointed out that robotics could be considered for bird hazing as well in addition to Pinniped Hazing.
- One member emphasized the need to focus on preventing naïve animals from getting up the river and suggested creating better habitats for them lower in the river.
- One member suggested resource-sharing among different predator management programs to advance this program. Another member suggested seeking partnerships with universities or research institutions to reduce costs. One member questioned the cost realism for lab testing and agreed that university partnerships could be a pragmatic way to cut down on cost.

Amira recapped the discussion by stating that there was an agreement that more brainstorming and collaboration is needed. She also stated that the Pinniped subgroup should prepare to present the concept to the Work Group at the next meeting and possibly discuss it with the SIWG if the group comes to consensus on the recommendation. The Pinniped subgroup agreed to meet before the next Predation Work Group meeting. Review and Consensus Building on Pinniped Removal program Extension Recommendation

Review and Consensus Building on Pinniped Removal program Extension Recommendation

Amira asked for the subgroup to go over the recommendation concept with the group. She reminded them that this was a concept to expand the current permit that exists for pinniped removal. She also stated that the I/RG showed support for this idea at the recent April meeting.

The group had the following input:

- Multiple members stated that more work is needed before this recommendation becomes actionable.
- Members stated that more research and data collection was necessary to support the extension of the permit. One member specifically stated the need for data on predation impacts in the lower river and suggested funding a study similar to the one conducted at Bonneville dam. Another member suggested that a previous study's data could possibly be used and suggested using adaptive management principles.
- Multiple members agreed on prioritizing existing haul out structures for removal.
- The group discussed the legal obstacles and permits required for pinniped removal above the I-205 bridge. Multiple members emphasized the need to clarify the goals and benefits of extending the program downriver before moving forward with this recommendation. One member proposed taking measures such as marking and tracking animals to collect data to have evidence as backing for the request to extend the authority below the 205 bridge.
- One member suggested that the current authority to remove pinnipeds from any tributary could be extended to the estuary.
- The group discussed a two-phase proposal, with phase I involving monitoring and analysis, and phase II focusing on permit alterations. Many members agreed with this approach, and no one voiced opposition. Additionally, members emphasized the urgency and expediency of the study phase.

Amira recapped the conversation by stating that more work was needed for this recommendation but there was an agreed upon approach.

Avian Recommendation Update

James Lawonn, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, provided an update from the avian subgroup, discussing the decline in Caspian tern population due to avian flu and the impact on management. Other members acknowledge the need to wait and see how the situation develops.

Confirm Action Items and Upcoming Meeting Topics

Action items from this meeting included the following:

- **Pinniped subgroup:** Convene to discuss and update the non-lethal pinniped recommendation.

- **Pinniped subgroup:** Convene to reform program extension recommendation.
- **KW:** Prepare for next meeting – send Doodle poll for next meeting and this meeting's summary to the WG for review.
- **Avian subgroup:** Continue to meet to discuss avian recommendations.
- **All:** Review meeting summary and prepare for the next meeting.

Amira thanked everyone for participating and adjourned the meeting.