

Columbia Basin Collaborative

Hydropower/Blocked Areas Work Group

Meeting Summary

Monday, April 24th, 2023, from 9:00am – 12:00pm PT/10:00am - 1:00pm MT

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), Brandon Haslick (Burns Paiute Tribe Fisheries), Calla Hagle (Burns Paiute Tribe Natural Resources), Casey Baldwin (Colville Tribes), Claire McGrath (Bureau of Reclamation), David Bain (Orca Conservancy), David Doeringsfeld (Port of Lewiston), Dennis Daw (Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation), Erick Van Dyke (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), Glen Spain (Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations), Haley Ohms (Trout Unlimited), Jay Backus (Port of Clarkston Commissioner), Jay Hesse (Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Management), 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), 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 Edmondson (Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation), Michael Garrity (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Michelle Adams (Temco), Paul Arrington (Idaho Water Users), Ritchie Graves (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries), Scott Hauser (Upper Snake River Tribes), Tim Copeland (Idaho Department of Fish & Game), Tom Iverson (Yakama Nation Fisheries), Tracy Bowerman (Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board), Tucker Jones (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife)

Observers in attendance: Anna Brady (Attorney for Colville Tribes), Erich Hester (United States Department of Energy), Heather Nicholson (Public), Jody Lando (Bonneville Power Administration), Kevin Malone (Public), Lance Hebdon (Idaho Fish and Game), Mark Martin (Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association), Michelle Mortimer (Rigby, Andrus & Rigby Law, PLLC), Rebecca Fritz (Burns Paiute Tribe Natural Resources), Stuart Crane (Yakama Nation Water Resources Program), 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 workgroup members, provided the meeting guidelines, and reviewed the meeting agenda. Agenda topics included: 1) Funding for Salmon Production in the Upper Snake, 2) Blocked Areas – Tributaries to the Columbia River Survey, 3) Hydropower – Actions to Address Needs, 4) Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary.

Updates from the I/RG meeting

Samantha provided a review of the topics discussed at the recent Integration/Recommendations Group (I/RG) meeting. I/RG members reviewed and provided feedback on one Blocked Areas recommendation and one Hydropower recommendation. The I/RG requested that the Hydropower/Blocked Areas workgroup simplify the Phase 2 Implementation Plan (P2IP) recommendation, and consensus support was given on the Natural Origin Run Timing recommendation. In addition, federal partners will be asked to draft language explaining their position on recommendations.

When outlining recommendations, workgroup members should consider how the recommendation meets the Columbia Basin Partnership (CBP) goals, what is the value add of the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC) to support this action, and what is currently preventing this action from happening. Samantha also shared that there will be a special session of the I/RG to discuss stakeholder engagement, among other topics.

Funding for salmon production in the Upper Snake

Scott Hauser, Upper Snake River Tribes (USRT), presented a concept to fund salmon production in the Upper Snake River. USRT has met with the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to discuss developing a recommendation to fund salmon recovery in the Upper Snake River. To meet medium to high-end goals, a dedicated source of fish will be necessary as will a source of funding. Scott noted that planning through the joint USBR and NMFS effort has looked at tribal and non-tribal harvest objectives, as well as listed and non-listed fish. Workgroup members were invited to think through a recommendation that would ask for funding for salmon production and involve all stakeholders and sovereigns.

The following key takeaways emerged from the discussion:

- Initial focus would be placed on Spring/Summer Chinook, with the first stock coming from the Rapid River Hatchery. Stocks for future use would need to be identified.
- The current hatchery infrastructure in the Upper Snake River would need to be repaired and updated to support this recommendation.
- This recommendation could be co-developed by a subgroup formed from Hatcheries/Harvest and Hydropower/Blocked Areas work group members.
 - The Hatcheries/Harvest work group was unable to reach consensus on a comparable recommendation to address the maintenance backlog for existing hatcheries, but are continuing to work on it.
- There is existing data to indicate that some habitats in the upper watershed are suitable to support salmon survival. USRT is working with USBR on trying to find funding to do intrinsic potential modeling in the tributaries of the Upper Snake.

A subgroup of workgroup members volunteered to support drafting a recommendation to fund salmon production in the Upper Snake. The facilitators will reach out to the Hatchery/Harvest workgroup to discuss co-developing this recommendation.

Blocked Areas – Tributaries to the Columbia River Survey

Samantha transitioned the discussion to focus on geographic-specific issues in blocked areas. Peggy Miller, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), gave a presentation on the Cowlitz and Lewis River Hydroelectric Projects. The presentation reviewed the licensing and agreements that govern the dams, the area covered by the dams, and the entities responsible for managing fish passage at each

location. Peggy reviewed the collection locations, types of collectors and bypass mechanisms, and plans for future collectors at these facilities. Peggy reviewed data from 2021 outlining the efficiency of existing collection efforts.

Michael Garrity, WDFW, presented on the Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River, a major tributary of the Okanogan River. The dam is the only major blocked area on the United States segment of the Okanogan. Michael provided a history of the dam, explaining that it has not been used to produce power since 1958 and is owned by the Okanogan Public Utility District (PUD). Dam removal has long been discussed for this facility, but until recently there had been little movement to consider the feasibility of removal. Trout Unlimited and the Colville Tribes have a NOAA grant to conduct a feasibility study looking at dam removal. WDFW is submitting a report to the state legislature on the feasibility of removal at the end of June, and the Trout Unlimited/Colville Tribes aim to release their report next year. Removal of the dam would restore access to significant habitat in British Columbia and provide a huge benefit to steelhead in the basin. There is a liability concern stemming, in part, from how to manage contaminated sediment due to historic mining efforts in the area.

Workgroup members inquired about potential sensitivities related to the removal of Enloe Dam. Michael shared that this is a good topic for the workgroup to track, while respecting the Okanogan PUD's requested process for answering significant questions about the feasibility of dam removal. Once those questions have answers, the CBC may be able to play a role in advocating for funding.

The workgroup discussion shifted towards identifying actions to address the needs identified in the Cowlitz, Lewis, and Okanogan Rivers. Samantha shared the Blocked Areas Survey table which had been populated with information pulled from the presentations.

Workgroup members shared the following suggestions, comments, questions:

- License implementation processes are currently on track to address issues identified at the Lewis and Cowlitz River. There are existing plans, funding, and organizations committed to working on these issues.
 - Stakeholders involved in the process would likely want to discuss internally whether support from any external entity would be beneficial to moving projects forward and if so, what kind of recommendation from the CBC could be helpful. Hydropower/Blocked Areas workgroup members engaged in those processes are asked to discuss this with their respective fish committees and report back to the workgroup.
- The liability associated with removing Enloe Dam poses a significant challenge to securing funding, and CBC may be able to play an important role in advocating for that funding.

Samantha shared that the next meeting would feature discussions on blocked areas in the Yakima and Deschutes Rivers.

Hydropower – Actions to Address Needs

Samantha reintroduced the Reach Survival/ Smolt-to-Adult Return (SAR) data recommendation that a subgroup has been working to refine. The workgroup reviewed a suggested edit to the sentence “The CRSO EIS and CRS BiOp both considered assumptions of delayed mortality” and decided ultimately to remove the sentence from the recommendation. A few of the workgroup members expressed interest in discussing delayed mortality at a future meeting.

The workgroup shifted towards discussion of the identified need to **Understand the ways (methods, infrastructure) to improve downstream passage for juveniles and steelhead kelts and overshoots.** Building upon what was shared in the presentation on overshoots provided at the 6th Hydropower/Blocked Areas workgroup meeting, workgroup members were asked to share suggested actions, comments, and questions about the need.

Workgroup members discussed whether a recommendation should be species-specific or should advocate for improving downstream passage for all species at all times of the year. The NOAA 2020 Biological Opinion (BiOp) provides flexibility for projects in the Lower Snake River and McNary Dam around the opening of surface passage routes at times of the season when juveniles are thought to not migrate. The expectation is for operators to open surface passage routes, four hours per day, three times per week. Preliminary findings suggest that 90%-95% of adult steelhead that encounter the blockages are utilizing those passage route opportunities and migrating downstream. It was noted that steelhead are particularly surface oriented, therefore the opening of these surface passage routes 12 hours per-week should be beneficial. Members shared that juvenile fish movement is being observed during non-traditional spill times, therefore an expansion of the scope of the recommendation is warranted with caveats for freezing conditions and maintenance periods. This issue significantly impacts steelhead, as well as other species. Several members expressed concern with looking at all species juvenile passage due to the large scale and varying data across the projects. Several members were interested in looking at the steelhead to begin.

Members discussed whether it was too soon to make a management action recommendation, or if the workgroup needs more information on juvenile migration and overshoots before sending recommended actions to the I/RG. It was shared that for the Snake Basin projects and mainstem Columbia projects, there is sufficient data to say that juvenile and adult fish are exhibiting downstream movement 12 months out of the year. Members recommended advocating for safe passage whenever data indicate fish are moving downstream. Additionally, the efficacy of opening downstream passage routes for 12 hours each week, per the 2020 NOAA BiOp, should be evaluated. The need for urgency and bold action to meet CBP goals was raised by members.

Samantha asked the workgroup if there were specific geographies that could benefit from focusing on juvenile passage. Members shared that the Upper Columbia is a large passage gap for steelhead overshoots and, with the exception of Grant PUD projects in fall, there is no surface passage route for them.

The following key takeaways were distilled from the discussion:

- When we have evidence of fish migrations, all projects should have safe downstream for overshoot steelhead (spill, bypass, surface passage, ice and trash sluiceways, etc.)
- When we have evidence of fish migrations, improve downstream surface passage across all times of the year for all species, accounting for realities of downtimes and maintenance
- Focus on what information we have and what information is needed to better understand this issue.
 - Is 12-hour spill in the Snake River sufficient for fish passage or is more needed?
 - Where we have data: Upper Columbia, Snake River, Mainstem Columbia River

A subgroup of workgroup members volunteered to support drafting this recommendation. The group will look at developing a recommendation that looks at steelhead as a start, but that could be tied to

other species and life stages in the future. The workgroup will discuss the need for **urgency to achieve success in meeting fish goals** at the next meeting.

Confirm Next Steps, Upcoming Meeting Topics, and Summary

Samantha reviewed the Hydropower/Blocked Areas work plan and expectations for the upcoming May and June meetings, including additional needs to be discussed. Workgroup members were invited to think about resources to address internal workgroup needs. Samantha thanks for workgroup members for their efforts and shared additional next steps as well as topics to be discussed at the next meeting

Action Items

- **All:** Please complete this Doodle Poll by end of day Friday, 4/28. Let us know if you need more time or assistance to complete this poll.
- **All:** Please complete this brief Hydropower/Blocked Areas Meeting 7 survey to share feedback on the meeting.
- **All:** Come prepared to discuss Yakima and Deschutes Rivers at the next Blocked Areas meeting
- **Dennis Daw, Mike Edmondson, Paul Arrington, Scott Hauser, John Simpson, Ritchie Graves:** Begin drafting a recommendation for finding a dedicated source of funding for the purpose of increasing salmon production to support and sustain a stable and guaranteed source of fish in the Upper Snake for tribal/non-tribal harvest.
- **KW:** Connect with the Hatcheries/Harvest Work Group to see if there are interested participants who would like to collaborate on a recommendation
- **Peggy/Michael:** Review the attached Blocked Areas Survey re: Lewis, Cowlitz, and Okanogan Basin and ensure the information is correct.
- **All:** Consider what CBC recommendations (if any) might be helpful to support work happening on the Lewis and Cowlitz rivers.
- **Hydro Sub-group:** Continue to work to refine language for Reach Survival and SAR data recommendation.
- **Keely, Ritchie, Jay H, WDFW reps:** Develop a draft recommendation around improving downstream passage for kelts and overshoots.
- **KW:** Draft a summary for meeting 7 and circulate it to the workgroup

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm PT/1:00 pm MT