

Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project
FERC No. 2016
Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee
Final Meeting Summary
March 5, 2024 from 9:30 – 2:30

FTC Representative Attendees:

Travis Nelson	TPU
Bryce Glaser	WDFW
Amy Kocourek	NMFS

Additional Attendees:

Thomas Starkey-Owen	ECY
Cam Penner-Ash	ECY
Peggy Miller	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
Kris Warner	WDFW
Todd Hillson	WDFW
Sean Toomey	WDFW
Melora Shelton	TPU
Jamie Murphy	TPU
Matt Peter	TPU
Steve West	LCFRB
Steve Manlow	LCFRB
Denise Smee	LCFRB
Michael Boyles	BPA
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Katie Buchan	USFS
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

Public Attendees: Larry Pryor, Randy LeDuc, Chris Foster, Pete Barber (Cowlitz Indian Tribe)

2024 FTC Meeting Dates: In-person meetings will include a remote option. Apr. 2, May 7, June 4 (in person), Aug. 6, Sept. 3 (in person), Oct. 1, Nov. 5, Dec. 3 (in person)

Approval of February Meeting Summary

The revised version of the February FTC Meeting Summary was reviewed and approved with clarifying edits and will be posted for public review.

Announcements

We were pleased to welcome WDFW fish biologist Sean Toomey to the meeting. He reports to John Serl who was not able to be with us today because he, for some reason, preferred to be with his wife on the Caribbean celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary!

Updates

Hydro Operations (presentation emailed on March 4)

Melora described the following:

- Kosmos Cleanup: As we will hear this afternoon from Cam Penner-Ash, Ecology is finishing up their review of the Remedial Investigation (RI) report. It will go to a 60-day public review which will lead to a feasibility study. Tacoma is continuing to monitor the site.

Action Item: Matt P to copy Thomas Starkey WQPP Plans along with Chad.

Fish Facilities

Separator:

- This is the slow time of the year for separator returns.
- Winter-run steelhead are the only fish returning right now.
- The weekly average for February was about 100 adult steelhead a week.
- The only Upper Cowlitz release site available for most of February was Franklin Bridge with the Scanewa Drawdown.
- Lake Scanewa was full again on Thursday (February 29) and fish were released there on Friday (March 1).

Broodstock Collection:

- Tacoma is currently collecting winter-run steelhead for the Tilton and the UCR Programs.
- To advance the Lower Cowlitz Program the goal was to start collection on December 1 rather than February 1. They have been collecting earlier the last couple of years and collection was completed for both males and females at the end of February.
- For both the Tilton and UCR programs only 10% of the NORs are collected to avoid over-mining the run (nine NORs need to go upstream before one can be collected to brood). Also, for every NOR collected for brood, two HORs need to be sent upstream for demographic replacement. Eric reminded all it's still very early in this run collection.

Mayfield Counting House:

- The Counting House was put into bypass mode at the end of December. It will be put back into normal operations again on April 1. Tacoma will open the facility for 24 hours each month during the off season to see what is coming through.
- For the February 24-hour operation, only six Chinook smolts and four coho smolts were collected, tagged, and released.

Action Item: Eric to check with Jamie re including in his weekly reports any deviations from the Adult Handling Protocol (AHP) so they can be included in the Annual Report. It would also be helpful to state whether any deviation was planned or not planned and any impacts.

Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility:

- Tacoma will begin their 2024 season with operations beginning on Friday March 15.
- Currently the TWG group has ongoing discussions on the feasibility of alternative study designs.
- Last season's Annual Report is currently with Tacoma for internal review and should be out to FTC before the April meeting.
- LCPUD will be continuing their debris cleanout in front of the units for another round beginning in mid-March and continuing for approximately four weeks. And although the CFFF will be operating, this is seen as a net positive as occlusion of the trash racks has been shown to be negatively associated with FCE.

Mayfield Downstream Fish Passage Remodel

Eric noted that after reviewing the three alternatives identified, the project team, working with their consultants has selected an alternative (3b) to move forward for internal review and approval. This process is ongoing and, if approved, will require spending authority and budget approval. The alternative selected involves moving the counting house and relocating the fish transport pipe. All changes are focused on the downstream side of the dam. The collection through the louvre bays, secondary separator, etc., will all remain the same. They will just be moving where the fish are processed.

Cispus Release Site (Tom Music Bridge)

Eric noted that due to LPUD's drawdown, the reservoir level has been too low to release at the Copper Canyon release site. Tacoma has submitted an amendment to the previous USFS Cispus Release Site Special Use permit for access to the river for LCPUD's maintenance permits and is awaiting USFS signatures. Kate reported that has been approved and they are reissuing that permit. She will confirm that it will be for a six-month period that includes June through September. Laura reported the PUD is still working on elements for the HPA and that should complete the permitting process.

Monitoring & Evaluation Subgroup

Bryce reported this group still has not met. While Tacoma continues to hire key personnel, the current work is occurring through offline discussions and email exchanges outside the subgroup, with consultant Four Peaks. Current efforts are to get the next draft of the M&E Plan out for FTC review. Travis reported that all vacant positions have now been filled except for the fish passage biologist. Tacoma's new Science Manager starts on March 25 and another hire starts March 11.

Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group (TWG)

This group last met on February 27. Their meeting notes sent to the FTC on March 1 detailed their discussions on the CF Northshore Collector (CFNSC) and Mayfield Operations, CF Dam Operations, and the 2024 DD review. The expectation is for the CFNSC Downstream Passage Annual Report to come out for a 30-day review before the April FTC meeting. Bryce reminded all FCE is a very important concept and must be properly calculated.

Coho Net Pen Project

Eric noted this (existing) net pen array is at the downstream end of Mayfield Lake. The FTC approved a DD on this project as part of the APR DD last fall. Some of the language in that document is ambiguous and has led to differing assumptions of some of the survival monitoring for those groups. Bryce said WDFW assumed there would be an evaluation of survival of groups of fish at juvenile and adult life stages – as is done at the hatchery for other programs. Tacoma's understanding was that the evaluation would only focus on juveniles and not include adults. (Tacoma has indicated they believe there are challenges with CWT tagging being available for the hatchery group.) We need to agree on what we will do for this year. This may mean revising the DD to add more detail for determining what we will do this year and what criteria would be used to determine if the net pen project would be extended for another year. Tacoma thought the pilot project intent was to ensure in-pen survival and in-hatchery survival were similar enough to continue beyond a pilot phase and therefore did not anticipate the evaluation including long-term adult survival in this phase. WDFW will evaluate Tacoma's proposal to use existing tags. Funding will extend to both years if the initial pilot proves successful. Bryce requested that Tacoma put together the criteria and decision points they plan to use to determine if the net pen pilot would move forward to the second year of implementation and bring that update to the FTC's next meeting. Eric indicated he would work on that and wanted to work collaboratively on developing that information.

Action Item: Eric to continue the discussion with WDFW (Kris and Bryce) and provide an update at the April FTC meeting.

2024 FTC Work Plan

Presenter: Travis Nelson

Travis projected the updated draft plan that was sent out to all on February 27. A few additional edits were made to the timing of the Downstream Adaptive Management Plan and also to the Mayfield Downstream Fish Passage Remodel. He also changed the schedule for the APR which, due to a lack of staffing, will occur in September instead of the usual April.

FTC Protocols: The FTC has been asked to consider allowing members of the public do presentations at FTC meetings. Travis said he is supportive of this idea and noted if there is agreement among FTC members to allow this, it would be helpful to have guidelines for them to follow. Bryce agreed guidelines would be good and said WDFW would support this occurring during the second public comment period. Travis suggested, these could mirror those set by the Commission for WDFW. How much time for a presentation is enough/too much? Are there topics that would be off limits e.g., harvest management?

Action Item: Travis to follow up with Bryce and Josua, Peggy, and Eric re proposed guidelines for public presentations to the FTC. These would include how far in advance they would have to request time to give a presentation, the structure of the presentation, etc.

LCPUD Dam Operations

Presenter: Peggy Miller

Russell was unable to attend the meeting due to a FERC Part 12 Inspection. Peggy participated in a meeting with Joe First and Ecology on March 1 and was able to provide the following update:

Debris Removal at Trash Rack: The contractor was not able to complete the work by the end of February, so LCPUD has hired a different contractor with a more skilled crane operator to continue the work. The work is scheduled for the week of March 13 through April 2024 for 4 weeks. If the work cannot be done in March, it may be done September through October. They will coordinate with Tacoma and this work will not require a drawdown of Lake Scanewa.

Debris Barrier Repairs: During the February drawdown sediment was removed around the blocks that support the Debris Barrier at the moorage site in preparation for the recoating work. The Debris Barrier will be floated to the moorage site July/August 2024 at full pool. The drawdown will occur the first part of September for the recoating work and will last for 2 months. It will be a 20-ft drawdown to 840 ft elevation and may fluctuate up to 844 ft. The recoating work is scheduled to be completed by October 26, 2024. There will be a WQPP for this work,

Sluice Gate Replacement: The current sluice gates are not effective and can only be used under certain conditions. The new gates will be able to be used more often to move suspended sediment to Riffe Lake. The work is likely to occur in 2027. The replacement of the gates will require a full drawdown of Lake Scanewa to riverine conditions. This work will require a variance from FERC for the drawdown.

Boat Barrier Replacement: This work is currently in the design phase and will require FERC review. Construction is estimated for October/December 2024 timeframe. This will not require a drawdown. It will include new anchors placed on the banks approximately 15 ft from the reservoir.

Update on Kosmos Clean-Up

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Presenter: Cam Penner-Ash

Cam is the Cleanup Project Manager for Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Program and the Site manager for the Kosmos Cleanup. He described the timeline from when Tacoma submitted a Draft Remedial Investigation (RI) report at the start of this year, to a revised Draft RI, a few weeks later, to next steps which include:

- Ecology finishing their review of the revised Draft RI
 - Errors, data gaps, appropriateness of report limits
 - Whether they can use the RI to guide the alternatives selected in the upcoming Feasibility Study
- Tacoma addressing Ecology's comments / requested changes
- Tacoma working on the Feasibility Study document to work to address areas of concern

Preliminary findings (only one year of data so far) were fairly positive, with very few readings above limits defined in the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA).

- Groundwater – shallow and deep wells. Diesel and oil range total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) detected above screening levels in shallow wells.
- 193 soil samples were collected. Everything is fairly shallow (5-18 ft). Gasoline, diesel, and oil range TPH was detected above screening levels in a few places but appears to be somewhat vertically constrained. Additionally, benzene was observed above screening levels in one location.
- Sediment samples indicate that the cap installed as part of the emergency interim action is effective.
- Surface water – of the six samples collected, all were below the Water Quality Protection Plan (WQPP) indicator levels.

Matt was pleased to report that the sheen that was visible on the water at the site for the first few years hasn't been observed in the last couple of years.

Timeline: Cam's questions on the RI should be done by end of March. Kevin Smith from Tacoma will be ready to receive. Matt P confirmed their consultants are starting to work on the feasibility study.

Cowlitz Restoration and Recovery Fund / Habitat and Production (HAP) Subgroup

Presenters: Melora Shelton and Steve West

2024 Grant Round (HAP): Melora reported no interest has been expressed this year. The deadline for required letters of intent was March 1, but she will hold off on making any changes to the website for now and wait a bit longer in case of any late USPS deliveries. The HAP Subcommittee will come to the FTC for an update in the May/June timeframe.

2024 Grant Round (Habitat): Steve W reported this is in the pre-proposal stage. Two potential sponsors have expressed interest so far. Draft proposals are due April 8. Site visits for CRR project proposals will be onsite on May 6 (FTC invited). The rest of the site visits will be virtual.

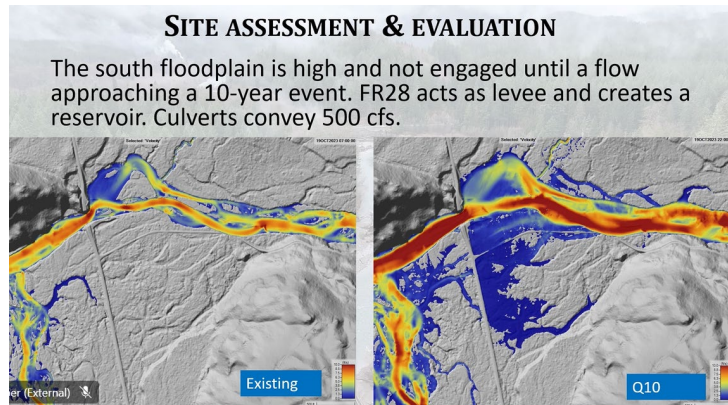
Project updates: The Cowlitz Indian Tribe has requested a time-only extension for Cispus Yellowjacket Phase 3 and will wrap up vegetation work this year.

Upcoming Amendment Request, Cispus Floodplain Reconnection Project:

Peter Barber, Habitat Restoration Program Manager for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe gave a presentation on a proposed amendment to incorporate additional geotechnical field work into the design phase of

their currently funded, ongoing project. This request has been reviewed by the LCFRB's TAC and has received their support.

Peter provided background on the habitat restoration work already completed, underway, and planned for the Cispus/Yellowjacket confluence area to provide context for the Floodplain Reconnection Project. The current design Project has evaluated and will provide a preferred design for floodplain reconnection upstream from the confluence in vicinity of the Tom Music Bridge. He described the need for, scope, and scale of the preferred design, including arrays of engineered log jams and replacing sections of the existing FS2801 road with up to 3 bridge spans (similar span length to Tom Music Bridge) to withstand 100-year floods.



The funding requested is for \$168K to cover the completion of three borings upstream of each bridge to a depth of 75 ft with a sonic drill rig. The Geotech information will inform bridge footings. The amendment request includes a scope and cost increase (adding borings targeted for summer 2024) and a time extension to complete design by mid-2025.

Melora noted the Floodplain Reconnection Project aligns with one of the strategic actions in the Upper Cowlitz and Cispus Habitat Strategy. It also has the ability to support other actions already occurring or planned to occur within that reach. This is also a request for a time extension. Peter is hoping for this drilling to begin in late summer or early fall and for design to continue through May 15, 2025.

Next steps: Because this amendment covers both scope and budget, we will mirror the FTC decision draft process for funding decisions. Following today's presentation, a draft DD describing the scope expansion and timeline extension will be sent out for review, discussed at the April FTC meeting, and a decision taken at the May meeting. The DD will include current balance on the CRR fund and amount already allocated to grant awards to date.

Action Item: All send any questions about this to Steve West and copy Melora.

Public Comment Period #1 - Agenda related

Larry Pryor: Can members of the public give presentations to the FTC?

Travis: This is being worked on and will likely be similar to the WDFW Commission protocols.

Topics for April 2, 2024 FTC Meeting

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops, Water Quality, Fish Facilities (including an update on fish runs), Cispus Release Site, Mayfield Downstream Fish Passage Remodel, Coho Net Pen Project
- LCPUD Cowlitz Falls Dam Operations

- FTC Protocols – Guidelines for public presentations (20 min)
 - Downstream Adaptive Management TWG (Charter)
 - Monitoring and Evaluation Subgroup (Charter)
 - CRR Fund / HAP Subcommittee
 - Preview May FTC Meeting Topics
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Public Comment Period #2 – Any topic

Randy: I am still just here for the fish. Can we include an update on fish returns (projections vs. actuals) at these meetings? This would tell us how the fish are doing and help us see successes and expand on them as well as make any course corrections. Can we add this topic to FTC agendas?

Eric: I will begin providing an update on fish returns once again (something we used to do regularly).

Larry: This is more than fish back to rack. It also involves SARs, comparatives, how the hatcheries are doing. Pulling from Josua and John's presentation at the APR meeting last year, Larry would like to present his ideas about how to move forward by starting with where we are currently and show how we might improve. This would include HSRG guidelines in comparing hatchery to natural SARs. How do you do adaptive management if you don't have adult return goals?

Denise: As Announced by Steve W at the February FTC meeting, LCFRB has a new Salmon Resources Map for the entire Lower Columbia with lots of data and features which is accessible from the LCFRB website. She encouraged those interested to take the tutorial on the site. She demonstrated how to access the many layers to the map. The intent behind the map was to create one stop shopping for this information which includes viability, polygons from the Upper Cowlitz Cispus Habitat Strategy – linked to the state's Salmon Recovery Portal as well so you can view all projects. Some lidar data is also available. There is also a draw feature, and you can print your map. This is an especially valuable resource to those who don't have GIS capabilities. The nationwide viability update for all salmon and steelhead stocks is also on the LCFRB website. It shows how we are doing at achieving broad based regional goals for salmon recovery. <https://www.lcfrb.org/salmon-resource-map>

Meeting Evaluation

- It was good to be together again.
- More drum rolls.
- Technology worked better this time. The Owl moved less and focused on motions.
- Good participation
- Pretty magical having the two Steves together in one place
- Need more extension cods
- Good sense of collaboration

Josua's Inspirational Quote

We seem these days to want everything faster and faster. This is in contrast with living things which proceed at nature's pace. We need to keep the big picture in mind. "Learning patience can be a difficult experience, but once conquered you will find life is easier." Catherine Pulsifer

Closing Remarks

Travis thanked everyone for their participation. As he has said in the past, Tacoma couldn't do this without everyone's hard work and commitment.

Parking Lot

- Presentation by Tacoma's Power Management Group and/or from Grant PUD re improving SAR
- Review Steelhead Kelt Recycling Program