

**Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project**  
**FERC No. 2016**  
**Cowlitz Fisheries Technical Committee**  
**Final Meeting Summary**  
August 6, 2024 from 9:30 – 2:30

**FTC Representative Attendees:**

Melora Shelton	TPU
Bryce Glaser	WDFW
Amy Kocourek	NMFS

**Additional Attendees:**

Thomas Starkey-Owens	ECY
Peggy Miller	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Brian Gale	WDFW
John Serl	WDFW
Kris Warner	WDFW
Todd Hillson	WDFW
Sean Toomey	WDFW
Kevin Young	WDFW
Jenise Bauman	TPU
Chris Vaughn	TPU
Matt Bleich	TPU
Eric Shoblom	TPU
Scott Gibson	TPU
Denise Smee	LCFRB
Steve West	LCFRB
Ann Weckback	Lewis County
Bill Sharp	Yakama Nation
Laura Wolfe	LCPUD
Lyn Wiltse	PDSA Consulting / Facilitator

**Public Attendees:** Larry Pryor and Jack Tipping

**2024 FTC Meeting Dates:** In-person meetings will include a remote option. Sept. 3 (in person), Oct. 1, Nov. 5, Dec. 3 (in person)

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**Approval of June Meeting Summary**

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

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**Announcements**

- We were pleased to welcome Jenise Bauman to the FTC. She is the Manager of Tacoma's Science and Research Group and will be helping to coordinate the M&E meetings. Welcome Jenise!
- Tacoma is seeking to fill two positions in Natural Resources and appreciated any referrals:

- License Coordinator <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/tacoma/jobs/4517396/license-coordinator>
  - Fish Passage Biologist <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/tacoma/jobs/4520140/fish-passage-biologist-natural-resources-analyst-principal>
  - The Cowlitz Annual Program Review and Science Conference Meeting will be September 4 from 10-5 at the Veterans Memorial Museum, 100 SW Veterans Way, in Chehalis.
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## **Updates**

### FHMP Transition Planning

Matt B proposed to reengage with regular FHMP updates, per the Work Plan, with intentional focus on Transition Plan updates. He anticipates a monthly cadence with corresponding content/species focus for each meeting. WDFW is supportive of this concept which is a similar approach to the M&E Plan deep dive updates – with clearly defined decision points and next steps. Matt B invited anyone interested in helping do this to contact Melora.

### FTC Work Plan/Protocols

Matt thanked everyone for their thoughts about expanding engagement with the public and how we can be both intentional and responsive as we discuss potentially bringing some public presentations to these meetings. Melora is setting up a meeting with FTC voting members about this and there will be an update on this at the September meeting.

### Mayfield Downstream Fish Passage Remodel

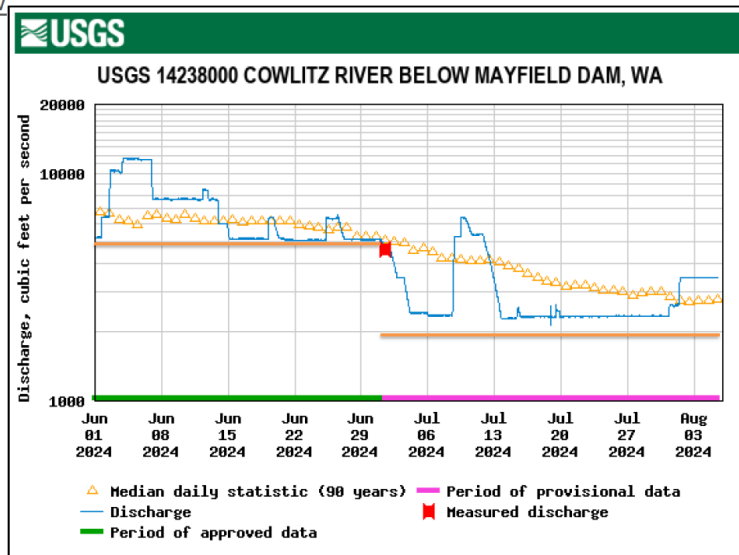
Matt explained that there will be an update on this with a timeline, likely in Q4 of this year. Internal discussions are ongoing as solutions are being evaluated that require intentional communication with the Dam Safety side of FERC before Tacoma is permitted to have public discussions. Stay tuned.

### Hydro Operations (presentation emailed on August 5)

Melora described the following:

- Inflows: Inflows April – July were very low (56-70% of normal), even with a big rain event in June; July also was very warm.
- Storage: Riffe Lake filled in mid-June and then drafted to 742 ft (3 ft above the recent 5-year average). Both Mossyrock ramps and North Taidnapam are open.
- Outflow: Near the minimum flow of 5K cfs (June) and 2K cfs (starting July 1), except during June water management. Discharge increased to about 3K cfs in August. Small ramp exceedances after a July 18 unit trip (transmission line disturbance); no flow excursions, flow stabilized within an hour. This will be included in the annual Article 402 report.
- 10-day Forecast: Warm and dry. Inflows below 2K cfs; discharge is expected to increase up to 6.7K cfs and then back to 4.8K cfs through the heat. La Niña condition is anticipated this fall, persisting into January. They anticipate operating near minimum flow until precipitation comes in this fall, except as needed for load.

## Outflow



Link to the USGS real-time Cowlitz River hydrograph:

[https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=14238000&PARAMETER\\_cd=00060.00065](https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site_no=14238000&PARAMETER_cd=00060.00065)  
<https://www.mytpu.org/community-environment/parks-recreation/river-flows-lake-levels/>

## Water Quality

- As Matt P was unable to attend, Melora shared preliminary water temperature profiles at Cowlitz Falls locations. Slides will be distributed.
- As reported in June, Tacoma secured permits for the replacement of four culverts on an unnamed tributary to Mayfield Lake. Culvert construction has begun.

## Fish Facilities (presentation will be distributed)

### Separator:

- Hatchery spring Chinook numbers are declining now. The return has been twice as high as the weekly 5- and 10-year averages. Tacoma ceased recycling the Kalama AD-RV spring Chinook on July 30. A total of 806 were recycled. On August 1 they went into the fall management timeframe and the Lower Cowlitz was closed to Chinook retention.
- Per the protocols, they are sending spring Chinook to Copper Canyon Creek and Franklin Bridge release sites each week as Scanewa is too warm and the Cispus Release site is not yet operational.
- Summer steelhead returns are above the 5- and 10-year averages with 4,575 returns to date. To date, they have recycled 4K summer run steelhead. All previously recycled fish are sent to a local foodbank. They easily met brood requirements.

### Brood Collection:

- Fall Chinook returns are just beginning. They are continuing with demographic replacement and a 1:3 mining rate per the protocol. There will be an update for these, coho and cutthroat at the next meeting.
- They will start collecting coho brood in September. The first coho showed up yesterday.

All HOR fall Chinook and a proportion of NOR fall Chinook will be retained for broodstock. NOR fall Chinook that are not retained for broodstock will be transported and released into the Tilton River.

### Mayfield Coho Net Pens:

Eric noted some materials have already been purchased. The roads are in good condition for the planting trucks. Tacoma is also securing in-water nets and predator netting. The plan is to transfer 98K fish to the four net pens in December at ~35fpp. They will be released on May 1 at 15fpp.

#### Rainbow Plants:

- 87K have been planted to date to the tune of 41K lbs between Swofford Pond near Riffe Lake and South Lewis County Park Pond in Toledo.
- In August 16K more will go to Mayfield.
- 5K will be reserved for the Lion's Club derby.
- A total of 50K lbs of trout are planted annually to support local fisheries.

#### Trout Hatchery Remodel:

Tacoma is evaluating water supply options which will drive the design for alternatives going forward. Eric encouraged everyone to monitor progress on the remodel through the Trout Hatchery remodel website which will be updated approximately every two weeks: <https://www.mytpu.org/community-environment/fish-wildlife-environment/cowlitz-river-project/cowlitz-fisheries-programs/cowlitz-trout-hatchery/cowlitz-trout-hatchery-remodel/>

Tacoma has submitted paperwork for short-term water rights and a geophysical survey to inform the remodel alternative analysis. That survey is occurring today. Due to these activities, camping at the Blue Creek Boat Launch area was closed today but should open back up August 7. LWD placement at Trout Hatchery scheduled for today has been postponed due to rising river levels. Pump tests will occur in early October.

#### Mayfield Counting House (presentation will be distributed)

Chris Vaughn gave an overview of the current tagging protocol and fish health. Staff is doing bio-sampling on 30 Chinook and coho and parasite analysis on up to 30 Chinook coming through the facility per week). Compared to the 5-year mean, Chinook numbers are slightly higher, coho are about average and are tapering off, steelhead are currently 1.5K above, and the cutthroat capture is right on. We are hovering right around the 5-year and historical mean for the cumulative smolt return to Mayfield.

#### Cowlitz Falls Fish Facility (presentation will be distributed)

Chris began by noting this has been a high debris year. Dam/passage operations will cease on September 1 when the Lake Scanewa drawdown begins. The last tagging date will be August 23.

Approximate collected to date:

- 175K coho – still getting good numbers
- 14K steelhead
- 10K Chinook
- 1K cutthroat

Approximate FCE (FCE trials will end with the Lake Scanewa drawdown)

- Coho 78%
- Steelhead 77%
- Chinook 45%
  - The alternative tagging strategy of 50 twice a week (vs. 100 once a week) began after July 4.

Over 1,100 Chinook fallbacks were sent back upstream.

The fall operations have been effective in collecting spring Chinook outmigrants since the Northshore collector has been in place. With the Lake Scanewa drawdown, those operations won't be happening this fall. We can compare this to the years when we didn't have those operations. Chris will follow up with Gabe to get this put on the TWG agenda. It is also important to address secondary collection again.

Bryce noted we want to try to minimize the adult fallback numbers. They are released to the reservoir until we reach temperature thresholds (which were met a month ago). They are now going to the Copper Canyon Creek release site. These fish haven't been marked. Chris will discuss this also with Gabe.

#### Cispus Release Site (Tom Music Bridge)

Laura reported LCPUD has hired a contractor to do this work which will occur in early September and likely take 3 days. The site should be functional for fall and winter. Many thanks to Laura and others who participated in making this happen!

#### Monitoring & Evaluation Subgroup

Scott reported the subgroup has been meeting monthly and making a lot of progress on the M&E Plan with the help of a consultant. The draft plan is currently being reviewed by WDFW. When the subgroup meets again on August 21, they will address comments and create a final draft for the FTC to review.

#### Downstream Adaptive Management Technical Work Group (TWG)

Chris noted the outmigration updates already given. The new tagging strategy recommended by the TWC for spring Chinook is underway. At the last meeting of the TWG, LCPUD gave a presentation on the Cispus Release Site. The debris barrier will be moved on August 19. Related work will likely extend through October. Chris provided an update on the Acoustic Telemetry Study set for 2025 and 2026. He also discussed the need to evaluate the efficacy of various tagging strategies.

#### WDFW Follow-Up

Chum spawning locations: Bryce noted WDFW is working on this through an external grant from the LCFRB. They have a signed contract and are beginning to work on study design. There will be further updates on this in the future on preferred site selection, etc. and then eventually the design.

September steelhead recycling: WDFW supports moving deadline for recycling from August 15 to August 31. WDFW may support expanding this recycling further into September. Expanding into September would need to be done along with an evaluation of the straying issue. The concern is that in September there are increased chance of freshets. Straying will also affect PHOS issues in the tributaries.

Invalid numbers in the RMIS database: Kris Warner has been researching this issue with the CWT data. Some tag codes came back as invalid query fields. These will need to be resubmitted for the database queries to function properly. These codes will have to be submitted with suffix to differentiate coho from Chinook tag groups. They will have to specify queries – stay tuned. Kris thanked Jack for raising this issue and John for his help. They need a pre-season plan for CWT application that can be reviewed by the FTC or subgroup to ensure we are following best practices and that they line up with RMIS submittal. This is related to determining the origin of fish as Tilton or Upper Cowlitz basins. John assured everyone all of the data are in the database. They are just hard to pull out at this point.

Steelhead recycling for the fall will be a topic for the M&E Subgroup.

## **LCPUD Dam Operations**

### **Presenter: Russell Page**

Unit 2 maintenance: (debris removal should be complete this week. The crane will be removed on August 9. They are currently at normal operating levels and are working with Tacoma on a cleanout agreement going forward.

The debris barrier will be moved to the moorage site and a 20-foot drawdown is scheduled for September 1 to facilitate repairs. The drawdown will likely extend through October. During that time, the PUD has hired contractors to do baseline defect mapping of cracking in the concrete at the dam.

He reminded everyone that last fall the PUD installed an additional turbidity sensor so now they have one on each side of the downstream bank. They also get regular readings from a dissolved oxygen sensor.

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

### **Presenters: Steve West and Melora Shelton**

Habitat Grant Round (presentation will be distributed): Two projects will be coming to the FTC for funding through the 2024 CRR habitat grant round. Proposals and associated materials are in the Google Drive folders the links to which were emailed out last week. Of the three proposals received, the TAC recommended that the following two projects be funded. Only CRR funds are being requested (no SRFB funds).

- Silver Creek Restoration Opportunity Identification: \$233K
  - Proposal will assess and document restoration opportunities as well as landowner willingness to implement Silver Creek (mainstem) restoration projects and create a conceptual design for one restoration project. There is also the potential for a hatchery project there in the future. The upper watershed is almost exclusively managed by the USFS who have indicated they are open to additional work upstream.
- Cispus Yellowjacket Phase 5 Design: \$345K
  - The proposal will develop preliminary designs to increase floodplain connectivity and in stream structure in 1.2 miles of Yellowjacket Creek a tributary to the Cispus River. Phases 1-3 are complete. Phase 4 is in process now – with construction expected in 2026.

Steve reviewed the TAC scores for the CRR and SFRB projects together. Cispus-Yellowjacket Phase 5 Design was the top project in the region; Silver Creek also scored in the top third of projects. The LCFRB Board will meet on August 9 to decide on their recommendation which will be reflected in the draft DD that will be presented to the FTC in September.

HAP Subgroup: The manual has been updated for the 2025 grant round as described in June. Melora will send out clean versions to the FTC. In June, they received a project information form (used for preliminary evaluation of a project idea) from Jack Tipping proposing a study to evaluate different rearing strategies and corresponding survival rates. Discussions on this will continue with the subgroup and others as they look for ways to align it with the CRR priorities. The fall workshop will be another potential engagement point. The Subgroup meets again on August 21.

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## **2024 APR Process (presentation will be distributed)**

### **Presenter: Eric Shoblom**

Eric reminded everyone that all production goals are set through FHMP plans. The hatchery programs offer some flexibility and can be adjusted to fit within available space and can also shift between species. The Annual Program Review meeting is also used to gather feedback for program improvements now and the future.

No production changes are being proposed for this year.

The Net Pen Coho Pilot Program will shift some of the coho out of the hatchery to create space for larger spring Chinook. Adaptive management is built into the plans. The draft APR DD will be out soon. Eric noted we usually hold the APR meeting in early spring. This year, we are doing it in late summer/early fall based on availability of Tacoma staff. The hope is to return the timing of this meeting to spring starting in 2025 (which will be a quick turnaround from this session). The plan is to also pair the APR meeting with the Science meeting next April. The draft agenda for the Science meeting is out for review. WDFW has a new communications lead in Region 5, this person can help with outreach for the Science meeting. WDFW offered to help with public outreach. If Tacoma takes WDFW up on their offer, Jenise will follow up to help get notice out from WDFW and Tacoma concurrently.

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### **Public Comment Period #1 - Agenda related**

Jack: Supports the assessment being done on recycling steelhead in September. When the study was done in the 1990s, the September fish had the highest numbers of harvest.

RMIS database: Need M&E Subgroup oversight on tag codes. Three of them used at Mayfield had been used on the Cowlitz for fish released in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Fall Chinook: For the APR process we need recovery to be the first priority. Spring Chinook also require additional resources.

M&E Plan: When can this be shared with the public?

Matt/Scott: Yes, all plans, once finalized, become public documents. The finalized M&E Plan is expected to be out within the next couple of months.

Larry: What all is included in the annual M&E Report? What are the parameters? He is concerned about adult returns.

Bryce: The M&E Plan is described in the FHMP. The scope is included there (prioritized monitoring needs for each species). The reporting for the M&E Report is part of the pieces of work WDFW does under contract with Tacoma and Tacoma does their own reports as well. They are all available on TPU's website.

Larry stopped by the Salmon and Trout Hatcheries in the last few weeks. Staff there are working hard to do a good job. At the Salmon Hatchery they discussed water, water quality, and flows, and the associated challenges. Staff reported not always being notified of fluctuations in flows. Low flows result in higher temps and other concerns. Fish culture practices for the Cowlitz should be updated.

Eric: Sometimes flows change rapidly and they haven't always gotten the word out in a timely manner. Such communication is prioritized. They are now better at alerting staff of flow changes.

Larry: He looks forward to attending the APR meeting. He knows the Fish Production Plan will be discussed and hopes discussions also include adult returns and how success is measured.

For the Coho Net Pen Program: Is the focus on early or late fish return?

John: Before the Transition Plan, the Cowlitz hatchery reared segregated and 100% pNOB integrated coho. The segregated coho typically returned about one to two weeks earlier than the integrated coho. This year will be the first year of adult returns from the new integrated coho program at 50% pNOB.

Bryce: Recovery objectives are outlined in the license, FHMP, and are to provide harvest mitigation.

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### **Topics for September 3, 2024 FTC Meeting**

- Updates incl. Hydro Ops
  - Water Quality – temp data April – August
  - Update on Chum Channel (Bryce and Todd)
  - Satellite Rearing Ponds
  - 2024 APR Process – Draft DD
  - 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
  - Downstream Adaptive Management TWG
  - Monitoring and Evaluation Subgroup
  - CRR Fund / HAP Subcommittee – Draft DD
  - Preview October FTC Meeting Topics
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### **Public Comment Period #2 – Any topic**

Larry: What is success as we move into the Annual Program Review? Fishermen see success as adult returns. The modern training that is now available needs to be implemented to drive success. There is a need for more modern advanced fish culture training for hatchery managers.

In attending Tacoma Public Utility Board meetings, he has been directed to go through Matt B with FTC concerns. He appreciates the interest from John O’Loughlin who just moved into the Chair role. A revision of the Fish Hatchery Management “Piper Manual” is underway.

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### **Meeting Evaluation**

- Great attendance once again.
  - Melora did great as an assistant facilitator and providing technical support
  - Good dialogue among the stakeholders
  - Good presentations
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### **Josua’s Inspirational Quote**

“The environment is where we all meet, where we all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share.” – Lady Bird Johnson

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### **Closing Remarks**

Melora thanked everyone for their participation and commitment to these meetings. Referring to Josua’s quote, she referred to a Venn Diagram with intersecting interests and a shared dedication to the environment. She is excited about using updates to the Transition Plans to show all of our work on moving the needle forward. Matt also thanked everyone for their collaboration in doing this.

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### **Parking Lot**

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