

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Cowlitz River Advisory Group

June 26, 2018

Chehalis Library, Large meeting room, 400 N Market Blvd, Chehalis, WA 98532

Attendance

Cowlitz River Advisory Group Members:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anthony Crocco | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jack Tipping |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Reid | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Shinn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butch Smith | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jon Vigre |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carl Burke | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larry Pryor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dan Tudor | <input type="checkbox"/> Lonnie Goble |
| <input type="checkbox"/> David Passmore | <input type="checkbox"/> Marcus Goodman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don Glaser | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Randy LeDuc |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gene Tripp | <input type="checkbox"/> Rudy Salakory |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greg King | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stan Bartle |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hank Emond | |

Tacoma Power:

- Keith Underwood

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Staff:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kelly Cunningham | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sam Gibbons |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bryce Glaser | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Wadsworth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John Serl | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Myrtice Dobler |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Gale | |

Public:

None

Meeting Agenda

- I. Introductions and opening remarks- Kelly Cunningham
 - a. Ground Rules- Review - Kelly
 - b. Follow up topics from previous meeting.
 - i. Finalize Meeting Notes from 5-17-18 – Myrtice
 - ii. CRAG membership solicitation – New Release - Bryce
 - iii. Current production Levels and 2017 Releases - Tom
- II. Finalize Draft CRAG Charter– Bryce Glaser
 - a. Review of comments from members
 - b. Alternates
 - c. Public Comment

- III. Finalize existing CRAG membership – Bryce Glaser/Myrtice Dobler
 - a. Review existing membership roster
 - b. Formally identify organization or user group each member represents
- IV. Topic List – prioritization for discussion in relationship to FHMP/HGMP updates - All
 - a. Review Topics received
 - b. Prioritization Discussion
- V. Cowlitz Spring Chinook and Steelhead update - Tom/Brian
- VI. Discuss next meeting date

Meeting Notes:

Ground Rules- Review:

The relationships between WDFW and the CRAG and among the group members are important. We all want to pull in the same direction. These ground rules will help guide our interactions. They will be part of all the future meetings.

Finalize Meeting Notes from 5-17-18:

There were no comments or addendums, we will print out meeting notes for future reference.

CRAG membership solicitation:

A news release went out a few weeks back, we will take applications through the end of July. The point of the solicitation was to add two members.

Current production targets and 2017 Releases (table in meeting handouts):

This was a request from the May meeting. Tom went over the 2017 release numbers highlighting species below and above target. There were questions on marking rates (adipose clip) and a discussion on estimation methods. There was a request for a more in-depth discussion on this later.

Where can the public get official release numbers? L. Pryor found release numbers on a website other than WDFW's that were different than what Tom provided to the group.

- We need to decide on the official source data.
- This is not an unusual problem in fishery programs
- This is one of the topics on the list for future discussions at some point

Finalize Draft CRAG Charter

Since our last meeting, no additional comments were received. There are two clarifications we would like to make before finalizing the charter:

- We will not have alternates for group members
 - To best help advise WDFW, we want to keep the knowledge base at the meeting and our members need to be up to speed and tuned into the decisions.
 - We will try to schedule meeting dates that work for most people.

- Allowing time for Public comment
 - We plan to allow 5-10 minutes at the end of the meeting for public comment.

Finalize existing CRAG membership and affiliation

We are asking who members are representing in the community, this does not have to be an organization.

Our goal is to clarify what group your opinion represents. This will help people outside of this group understand how diverse our group is. This doesn't have to be a formal affiliation to a recognized group, but could be that you are a landowner on the Cowlitz, or represent anglers from a geographic area.

To date we have not received everyone's affiliation. We will work individually with you to get the roster updated.

List of Topics submitted by CRAG members to be discussed at future meetings

Bryce reviewed topics received from a few CRAG members (listed in the handouts). He acknowledged that there are cross over relationships in some of the topics, and did try to group them by related topic

There are a few ideas we worked on during the 15-17 legislative session that might be high priority topics to discuss at upcoming meetings:

- Increasing recycling of summer steelhead
- Increasing spring Chinook production
- Increasing fall Chinook production and harvest of natural origin Chinook, we might have some permitting work to update the existing Fisheries Management and Evaluation Plan (FMEP), we can do this, but has a longer timeline until completion.

We went over other topics from the list that are high priorities for the CRAG:

- FTC engagement- the FTC is currently working ways to improve communication with the CRAG and should have a plan soon
- Advance return time of winter steelhead- WDFW is currently exploring options
- Chum reintroduction effort
 - Chum reintroduction strategy for Columbia, need to identify the appropriate stock.
 - Staff have worked on this and would be able to bring something to the table.
- Orcas have brought more focus on hatchery production
 - Enormous opportunity here. Legislature is looking at this on a large scale.
 - There are things that are not clear- e.g., if we are allowed to raise more fish, would we be able to harvest those fish?
- Satellite rearing ponds
 - Tacoma Power recommends bringing in a consultant so this can be rolled into the HGMP

- Fall chinook
 - Some anglers are catching a lot of wild fish
 - Fish coming out of the hatcheries are marked
 - The increase of natural fish returning to the Cowlitz River is changing the balance, if it continues we might be able to ask for increased hatchery production.
 - Suggestion from a CRAG member to change the daily limit to 1 fish.
- Riffe lake
 - Tacoma Power asked if we want a salmonid fishery in Riffe Lake?
 - It could be an HGMP item if Tacoma is participating
 - More plants in the lake may not result in an improved fishery
 - Could monitor fishery and see if it changes before implementing stocking
- Summer Steelhead recycling
 - Currently it's capped at 3,300
 - We are working on getting all the newest information into the ISIT model
 - We plan to revise and rerun those models to put it in the FHMP
 - WDFW can commit to recycling 3,300 if the fish are available, then address it in the HGMP
 - This year there will likely not be enough returns to recycle 3,300 fish
- Net pens at Mayfield lake
 - Some CRAG member feel the fall chinook are not doing well, perhaps move them
 - This will be explored when we look at the spring/fall chinook production topic
- Cowlitz Fisheries and Hatcheries Management Plan (FHMP)
 - The FTC is currently planning to revise the existing FHMP but has made little progress for a number of reasons.
 - We are still functioning under the existing FHMP until the revision is complete.
 - Tacoma Power is writing a draft chapter for Coho. They are trying to make the document easier to understand. They will provide the draft to the FTC in July. Once we get further in the process it will be shared more broadly and engagement will begin.
 - The full FHMP is due FEB 2019.
 - The CRAG requests to be included early on in the process of so they could help and give input instead of reacting to a final document.
 - Part of the goal for the CRAG is to help rewrite/update the HGMPs and FHMP. WDFW is looking for conversations and engagement. The CRAG requested to have as much time as possible to review documents.
 - Early engagement was committed to, we will share where Tacoma Power and WDFW are coming from and where there are pinch points. Time will be carved out for these discussions in the future agendas to check in and engage.
 - One CRAG member suggested he would like to see loss mitigation in the FHMP.

CRAG members asked how do you negotiate with NOAA when they disagree with what we are asking?

- Part of it will come from this group
- If NOAA is at the table at CRAG meetings, we hope to have the discussions along the way. As described in the Charter, NOAA will be invited to attend CRAG meetings when appropriate.

Question regarding HSRG. The Fish and Wildlife Commission told staff to suspend the first 3 guiding principles (brood stock management). We've been asked to do a 6-12 month review and report back to the Commission.

HGMPs will still have to follow those guidelines. This was to prevent fish management from being limited by internal policy if federal mandates change due to Orcas.

Prioritization of Topics for Discussion

The top items identified by the CRAG were:

- Review of how FHMP is forming – early engagement by CRAG
- Increased spring/fall chinook production
 - What are the options (capability/capacity) for the Cowlitz in terms of Chinook production
- Early winter steelhead program
 - What options do we want to lay out in the HGMP?
 - These will have an effect on the number of the summer steelhead.

We will focus upcoming meetings on the topics listed above. We will keep making progress on other topics as time permits but these were considered to be the top priorities. Staff will bring back what might be viable options/questions/concepts for feedback and input.

Cowlitz Spring Chinook and Summer Steelhead update

- **Summer Steelhead**
 - Estimating 1,500 fish back based on very early return numbers to the hatchery.
 - Only about 13% of run has returned so far based on average run timing.
 - For more accurate numbers on the run size we need to be further through the run.
 - Broodstock goal is ~900 fish.
 - Started collecting a little early this year (June 16).
 - 136 fish on hand right now for broodstock.
 - We will be collecting as normal starting July 1.
 - WDFW's main concern is meeting the broodstock goal along with maintaining the fishery as long as possible.
 - A small number of hatchery returns were recycled so far above weekly broodstock goals.
- **Spring Chinook**
 - We are at the tail end of the run.

- Expected a low run this year before the season started.
- We were able to maintain a fishery for most of the season.
- We still need a few hundred more fish to get hatchery brood stock goal of ~1600 fish.
- Approximately 180 fish have been put upriver.
 - Target is 5,000 fish for upriver reintroduction and fisheries, realistically we may get 400 or 500 upriver this year.
- We are tracking right on our brood collection curve, but are worried about meeting brood and want to give ourselves a bit of assurance.
- We are looking at closing the fishery to Spring Chinook retention to get broodstock and get more fish up river, Steelhead will remain open.
- WDFW is considering closing the Cowlitz to retention of Chinook for the rest of the spring Chinook season and wanted to get the CRAG's input on this.
- The CRAG said hardly anyone is fishing the river, those fishing are targeting spring chinook.
- The conclusion was that the fishery doesn't seem to be having a huge impact on the broodstock collection (i.e., not much harvest), but closing it won't have much of an impact on anglers.

Other topics

- There was a discussion on how WDFW is protecting against bird predation on the lower Cowlitz. WDFW does not have a clear direction or authority on the Cowlitz, but there have been efforts in the Columbia River. Questions were raised about what USFWS was doing on Sand Island, staff were unsure. It was requested that WDFW look into the impact.

Public comment

None, no public in attendance.

Action Items

Item	Assigned to	Due
Collect affiliations from current CRAG members. Send out an email or call each member.	Myrtice Dobler	Before Aug. meeting
Bring what might be viable options/questions/concepts for feedback and input on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of where we are with the FHMP ● Spring/fall chinook production ● Early winter steelhead production 	WDFW Staff	Before Aug. meeting

Next Meeting

We plan to have our next meeting mid to late August.