

# Meeting 4 Notes

Avian Salmon Predation Work Group

## Meeting Details

Date: Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Time: 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

## Agenda

## Action Items

| <i>What?</i>   | <i>Who?</i>                       | <i>When?</i>  |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| Solicit additional WG thoughts on the report's requests and recommendations section.   | ASPPWG Facilitation Team          | Week of May 12 to incorporate in draft report           |
| Revise ASPPWG draft report based on WG comments and Meeting 4 discussion, including the Intervention Principles.   | ASPPWG Facilitation Team and WDFW | Week of May 26 for WG to review in advance of Meeting 5 |
| Develop a "remedies table" that builds on the initial literature review of current and previous actions; include attributes such as permitted/nonpermitted, brief history, and outcomes/unintended consequences. | WDFW                              | Week of May 26 for WG to review in advance of Meeting 5 |

## Meeting Notes

Jennifer Sepulveda (WDFW, ASPPWG Facilitator) called Meeting 4 to order and provided an overview of the meeting's objectives and agenda. The ASPPWG offered meeting observers to share comments before beginning their discussion but there was no public comment at this time. The ASPPWG discussed the intervention principles (initially developed during Meeting 3) in the morning; took a 30-minute lunch break at 12:00pm; and discussed remedies to avian predation and recommendations to the Legislature in the afternoon. They offered another opportunity for public comment before adjourning at 3:00pm. Discussion highlights for each substantive agenda topic are listed below.

### Intervention Principles

Shelby Thomas (Ross Strategic) presented a revised draft of the ASPPWG's Intervention Principles for Avian Predation based on the feedback the working group (WG) provided between Meetings 3 and 4. The WG's discussion focused on three main topics: defining remedy effectiveness and potential metrics; how a remedy fits into the bigger ecosystem picture; and whether and how a remedy should align with cultural values.

### Effectiveness (Intervention Principle #1)

- The WG expanded the principle on effectiveness by clarifying a remedy should address a known problem in a specific area and the problem, evaluation, and metrics should be agreed upon by comanagers.
- A remedy should reduce avian predation in specific areas to lead to more juvenile salmonids leaving a reach or action area.
- When possible, evaluating smolt quality in addition to overall quantity is important.

### Ecosystem and Cultural Values (Intervention Principles #3 and #4)

- The WG separated the principle related to ecosystem and cultural values into two principles: the remedy should align with ecosystem-based principles and the remedy should recognize there is a diversity of cultural values.
- Although a remedy is designed to address specific problems, it is executed within a broader recovery context and its impacts should be considered at both scales.
- A remedy cannot necessarily be consistent with the system's "natural" predator-prey balance, given the fact that most systems are highly altered (especially the Columbia River System). This is critical context to acknowledge when designing any remedy.
- While a remedy cannot align with all cultural values related to birds and salmonids, it can be designed with an eye to the myriad values and cultural resources present in the region; it can also acknowledge any role it may have in continuing or avoiding environmental justice impacts in the region.

### Other

- A remedy should fall within reserved and treaty-established rights and trust resources.
- A remedy should not be abandoned if it is not "easy" to communicate to the public.
- There is a tension between transparency and appropriate community engagement. This balance should be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- A remedy should be based on best available science and adaptive management principles.

### Remedies

Jennifer Sepulveda asked the WG how they would like to respond to the Legislature's request that they "identify remedies" to avian predation on salmonids. The WG generally agreed the report could include an inventory of both permitted and non-permitted management actions, many of which are already described in several reports the WG has referenced. Jess Stocking offered to draft a table of management actions that builds on the initial literature review of current and previous actions and includes attributes such as permitted/nonpermitted, brief history, and outcomes/lessons learned.

The WG's discussion on identifying remedies included the following points:

- Most management actions will likely result in the displacement of birds, aka, "whack-a-mole" effect where birds simply move from one location to another and continue their behaviors there. A more fruitful line of thinking is related to understanding birds' options and how to get them to move to a more desirable location (where their impacts on juvenile salmonids will be reduced). This is referred to as a "push-pull" technique: How can managers "push" birds from one location and "pull" them to another?
- The ASPWG Intervention Principles should inform selection from the inventory of remedies.

## ASPWG Requests and recommendations to the Legislature

Jennifer and Nate Pamplin (WDFW) invited the WG to share its thoughts on potential requests or recommendations for the State Legislature by responding to the following prompts: Knowing the Legislature has the ability to change state laws and regulations and allocate money, what should the ASPWG report emphasize to legislators? The WG articulated four initial requests in its discussion:

1. Fund a WDFW position that is focused on the shared needs of birds and salmon. The person or people in this role can make critical connections between ecosystem recovery actions that benefit both species and increase the Department's ability to participate in avian predation policy and science.
2. Fund research that examines geographically-specific anecdotes of salmon predation by birds, particularly in Puget Sound. For example, the Stillaguamish is often cited as a place with high avian predation on salmonids but there is little to no data that could reinforce this. This request is more focused than a general, "fund study of avian predation in Puget Sound;" it would be a more efficient use of resources and avoids suggesting there is a problem with birds in Puget Sound.
3. Coordinate with Oregon to fund avian predation management in the Columbia River corridor and continue to support existing management actions taking place there.
4. Update Washington seabird colony inventory or diet database and increase knowledge and understanding of piscivorous bird populations.

The WG's discussion on requests/recommendations to the Legislature included the following:

- Regional data sharing and coordination is a huge challenge.
- The Legislature needs to understand how complicated this topic is.
- Effective management requires coordination across jurisdictions and among co-managers.
- Unintended consequences need to be taken seriously and anticipated.
- Actions taken in Washington will affect management actions in surrounding states.
- There's a general consensus in Columbia birds are a low-hanging fruit and building resilience into these populations with pending climate change is a must.
- Avian management is a really small piece of the puzzle.
- Effective actions, monitoring, and adaptive management require adequate long-term focus and funding.
- "System-wide" management is a positive direction we see the Columbia River System moving towards but this has been a long time coming and includes many monitoring efforts.
- The Astoria-Megler Bridge is a location the WG generally agrees needs cormorant management. A management plan is underway and the bridge is under Oregon's jurisdiction.

## Meeting Attendees

### ASPWG Members, Roles, and Affiliations

- Aaron Brooks, Fisheries Management Specialist, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
- Bill Sharp, Yakama Nation
- Bryce Devine, Columbia River Commercial Fisherman

- Clark Watry, Aquatic Invasive Species Program Lead, Nez Perce Tribe
- David Troutt, Natural Resources Director, Nisqually Indian Tribe; Chair, Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Center
- Emma Sands, Harvest Management Biologist, Quileute Tribe
- Jennifer Urmston, Migratory Birds and Habitat Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Jessica Stocking, Marine Coastal Flyway Section Manager, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Joy Lee Waltermire, Senior Fish Biologist, Long Live the Kings
- Robert Sudar, Commercial Salmon Fishing Industry
- Ron Garner, President, Puget Sound Anglers
- Sean Tackley, Fish and Policy Program Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Northwestern Division
- Todd Hass, Special Assistant to Director, Puget Sound Partnership
- Trina Bayard, Interim Executive Director and Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Washington; Coordinator, Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program Bird Work Group

#### Project Team and ASPWG Role

- Jennifer Sepulveda, Communications Manager, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife – ASPWG Facilitator
- Nate Pamplin, Director of External Affairs, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife – ASPWG support
- Shelby Thomas, Ross Strategic - ASPWG support

#### Observers

- Allison Anholt
- Butch Smith
- Stacy Horton