

# **Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Recreational Anglers Board Meeting**

February 23, 2017, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board Conference Room  
1200 Chesterly Drive, Suite 280 Yakima, WA 98902

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **1. Introductions - Roll Call**

#### Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Recreational Anglers Board (CRSSRAB)

Stan Bartle – Region 5  
Dan Davies – Region 2  
Tom Fritsch – Region 5  
Del Groat – Region 1  
Lawrence Hill – Region 2  
Curtis King – Region 3 (absent)  
Steve Martin – Region 1 (Chair)  
Jerry Rhoads – Region 3  
Ed Wickersham – Region 5 (Vice-Chair)  
Bob Whitehall – Region 2

#### Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Staff:

Chris Donley - Region 1 Fish Program Manager  
Jeff Korth – Region 2 Fish Program Manager  
John Easterbrooks – Region 3 Fish Program Manager  
Cindy LeFleur – Region 5 Fish Program Manager  
Ann Stephenson – Region 5 Fish and Wildlife Biologist/CRSSE Admin. Coordinator  
Tom Wadsworth – Region 5 District 10 Fish Biologist  
Chief Anderson – Enforcement  
Captain Wickersham – Region 5 Enforcement  
Paul Hoffarth – Region 3 District 4 Fish Biologist  
Matt Hunter - Enforcement  
Eric Fiedler – Business Operations Manager  
Thomas Buehrens – Research Scientist

#### Public Attendees:

Ian Courter – Mount Hood Environmental

### **2. Open Discussion**

Several topics were brought forward by the CRSSRAB for this discussion:

- Does the Board support the proposed amendment to House Bill (HB) 1865 (new CRSSE legislation)?

The bill to continue CRSSE program past June 30, 2017 is currently being debated in the Washington State legislature. It includes new language relative to

previous CRSSE legislation that states CRSSE funds “may not be used to acquire land or develop fishing access sites.”

Chris Donley (WDFW), Steve Martin (CRSSRAB) and others met with legislators including Sr. Senator Schoeslor on Dec. 17, 2016 regarding Tucannon River. At this meeting Senator Schoeslor brought up his desire for the CRSSE funding not to be used for land purchase and development. The main concern on the part of legislators is with the state purchasing land and reducing tax rolls for counties. However, payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) are made by state agencies. There is also a concern that this takes away land that could be purchased for ranching. Lastly, there was concern about the ability to manage existing land owned by WDFW. Easements were not discussed during this meeting. Past funding for CRSSE projects to develop fishing sites has been a small fraction of overall spending. The Board may have agreed upon using 2% of the CRSSE fund for this type of project in the past but this might not have been voted on (i.e., may have just been a suggestion by one or more Board members). The Board would like to be able to use some portion of the fund to improve fishing access in the future.

- Should the Board consider using CRSSE funds to assist in a buyout of the lower Columbia non-Indian commercial fleet?

Such a buyout would likely not completely eliminate the fishery, but could remove many of the commercial licenses that are no longer in use (currently there are roughly 300-400 licenses). Could be looked at more as a buyout of the allotment vs. individual fishermen. The commercial fishery could still focus on seining or other alternative gears. The Board had a variety of thoughts on this but some were concerned about whether this would fit the criteria for funding and whether recreational anglers would support using the fund in this way. The Board discussed the possibility that even with a buyout that reduced the fleet, the commercial fishery could still catch the same number of fish relative to the allowed impacts. It was also mentioned that the Oregon endorsement program specifically includes a provision to fund a buyout of lower river commercial fishing licenses.

- Does the Board support the proposed guide stamp on the Columbia River?

Although the Wild Futures bill continues to change through ongoing legislative debate, at this time the proposed stamp for guided trips would be \$15 for salmon and steelhead (typical anglers would pay about \$27). This idea was based on a similar program for the charter fleet. It is not yet clear how this will be included in the final Wild Futures package which is currently going through some changes. The Board did not propose any action on this subject.

- WDFW Budget and the proposed license fee increase

WDFW budget requests for 3-5 bienniums were included in the new bill. WDFW's initial request was for \$25 million to maintain current activities in the

next biennium. Without this, WDFW will have to cut some fisheries/hatcheries. There was an additional request for \$15 million to add or improve fisheries.

- 2017 CRSSE proposal score sheets

There was discussion by the Board to the effect that some criteria used by the Board for scoring proposals may need to be changed for the future. Some proposals were easier to score because the criteria were outlined within the proposals. This should be considered a work in progress and the subcommittee may need to meet again soon to work on the criteria further.

### **3. Approval of August 10, 2016 Meeting Minutes – Chair**

No discussion occurred and approval was unanimous

### **4. Legislative Update**

- The program is still authorized through June 30, 2017.
- House Bill 1865, currently under consideration with the legislature, would extend the CRSSE program through June 30, 2022.
- The Board again discussed the proposed amendment to HB 1865 and the restriction it would place on funding of projects to improve recreational fishing access. A motion was made for an advisory vote by the Board on whether they favor the provision as written on lines 17-18 of HB 1865. The Board unanimously voted their opposition to this amendment. The Board agreed that this provision, if approved, would conflict with the mission of the CRSSE program as understood by the Board.

**Action Item:** CRSSRAB will write a letter to the WDFW director expressing their opposition to the proposed amendment to HB 1865.

### **5. Financial Reports**

- a. 2016 Fish Project Spending to date (file)

Spending was less than planned for the 2016 projects through January.

- b. 2017 Proposals – Total request amount (2017 Matrix)

Total request was slightly higher for 2017 relative to 2016 proposals.

- c. 2015-2017 Fund Balance; 2017-2019 biennium forecast

The WDFW budget office estimated \$68,000 is available to spend in the 2015-2017 biennium. The WDFW financial office forecasts the fund each biennium; we do not yet have a forecast available for the 2017-2019 biennium. The WDFW budget office did use a 5-year average to estimate revenue for the fund in the next biennium. The

question of whether enough funding was available to cover the existing and new proposals through this fiscal year and beyond was not answered.

**Action Item:** The WDFW budget office will confirm available funds once the new biennium forecast is released by the WDFW fiscal office.

**Additional Budget Discussion** (note: this discussion occurred later in the meeting but placed here to avoid confusion)

The Board and WDFW staff discussed options to prevent getting charged twice for the Proportion of Admin Funding (PAF) if the full spending authority is not spent in a given year. PAF is charged based on the spending authority, which was \$3.3 million for the 2015-2017 biennium. One option is to ask the central budgeting office for a lower spending authority and then ask again for an increase as needed to cover spending.

**Action Item:** WDFW fish program, enforcement and budget office will discuss this option to determine feasibility in reducing the PAF charges, there may be roadblocks.

It was also suggested by enforcement staff that all projects be moved to a state fiscal year schedule (July 1 – June 30) rather than starting prior to July 1 and continuing past July 1. This would greatly simplify budget planning and tracking for the CRSSE program. However, this would mean changing several renewal and new proposals that are not currently following this schedule.

Enforcement is currently estimating that it will be overspent relative to their spending authority allocation for the biennium (through June 30, 2017) by approximately \$148,000 if spending continues as planned. One option is to see if Fish Program can reduce spending in the next four months to cover this overage. Another option is for Enforcement to stop spending once they reach their current limit.

**Action Item:** Fish Program Assistant Director and the Enforcement Chief to figure out a solution to the projected budget problem for Enforcement.

The Board requested to be briefed if WDFW decides to appropriate a different amount between fish and enforcement relative to what the Board approves.

## 6. **Consent Agenda** (8 Renewal Proposals)

The Board discussed whether it was appropriate to continue voting on a consent agenda given the transition to scoring proposals for determining Board priorities. This year only the new proposals and ‘renewals for discussion’ proposals were scored (regular renewals were not scored). The approved CRSSAB Process Manual states that Board members would rank all proposals using the ‘Proposal Evaluation and Ranking Matrix’ included in the Process Manual.

**Action Item:** The Board agreed that in the future all proposals would be ranked included renewals but that renewals would not need to be ranked more than once if they do not change much in scope or budget. It was noted that if any of the scoring criteria defined in

the Process Manual are to change it may be best to wait until criteria are revised before scoring any of the renewal proposals.

The following proposals were included in the consent agenda:

- a. Region 2
  - i. Upper Columbia River ESA Biologist
  - ii. 2017 Methow River spring Chinook Conservation Fishery Creel
  - iii. 2017-18 Upper Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Fisheries Creel Monitoring
- b. Region 3
  - i. 2017-18 McNary Reservoir Steelhead Fishery Monitoring
  - ii. Ringold Springs Hatchery Steelhead Tagging Study
- c. Region 5
  - i. 2017 Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Administrative Coordinator Position Funding
  - ii. Lower Columbia River Mainstem Summer and Fall Chinook Salmon Mark-Selective Sport Fishery Creel Sampling
  - iii. 2017 Lower Cowlitz River Tributary Resistance Board Weir Operation

The consent agenda was approved unanimously by the Board.

## **7. Renewal Proposals for Discussion (6 proposals)**

- a. Enforcement – Captain Wickersham/Matthew Hunter (see PowerPoint)

Continued Funding of enhanced Enforcement of CRSSE Fisheries and Designated Waterways (2017-2019 Biennium)

- Proposed budget is less than previous proposal
- 8 votes to approve (one abstention - Ed Wickersham, one Board member absent)

- b. Region 1 – Chris Donley

Monitoring of 2017-2018 Summer Steelhead and 2017 Spring and Fall Chinook Salmon Fisheries in SE Washington

- Last year Region 1 submitted four proposals, this year three of those proposals were combined into one proposal and one (Grand Ronde Spring Chinook) was not included due to the expectation that the fishery will not occur. If the Grand Ronde spring Chinook fishery does occur, sampling will be paid for out of the budget for this proposal.
- Includes creel and developing some modelling
- Budget is slightly higher than previous proposals
- Some discussion focused on permitting for this work. Currently it is under 4D rules but may need to change to Section 10 requirements in the future. Approval was unanimous

c. Region 3 – John Easterbrooks

- 2017-18 Hanford Reach Fishery Monitoring
  - Budget was reduced by approximately \$4,000
  - Propose to start creel June 16 rather than August 1 to get data on summer Chinook and sockeye
  - Summer Chinook and sockeye are not ESA listed, monitoring would be for management purposes.
  - Approval was unanimous
  
- 2017 Yakima River Spring Chinook Mark-Selective Fishery Monitoring
  - Budget increased by approximately \$2,000.
  - Proposed expansion of the fishery above Prosser about SR 241 bridge/reservation boundary(12.6 more miles open).
  - This is not affected by ESA listings.
  - It was noted that the MOA with Yakima Nation should be considered a partnership within the ranking criteria
  - Fishery would operate with a 10% assumed release post-mortality rate and gear restrictions
  - Approval was unanimous

d. Region 5 – Cindy LeFleur/Thomas Wadsworth

- 2017 Rotating Steelhead Creel Surveys for Lower Columbia River Watersheds
  - After completing six years of the project, the proposal would shift creel work to a new suite of streams, primarily in the coastal areas of Region 5.
  - Option A includes creel in the winter steelhead timeframe only
  - Option B would include summer steelhead creel on the Elochoman for an additional \$29,300
  - Summer steelhead are released on the Elochoman but very few are recorded on catch record cards. With Option B we could hopefully verify if the fish are being caught but not recorded or if they are not being caught as the catch record cards indicate.
  - Option B would still cost less than last year's proposal due to less staff time needed and some efficiencies
  - This project would survey these streams for the next three years and after that we would have a very good database of creel for Region 5. In three years we could discuss where and when to conduct further creel efforts in Region 5 depending on results of analyses and remaining questions.
  - Option B was approved by a vote of 8 to 1; one member (Jerry Rhoads) voted for Option A
  
- 2017 Land Access Investigation and Identification on Mainstem Columbia River and Tributaries in Region 5
  - This project was funded last year and work was done by Region 5 biologists and lands agent
  - Investigated six priority sites to determine land ownership, talk to owners, determine next steps for improving access where possible
  - For this year changed the title to better reflect nature of work (not land acquisition)

- This year plan to continue developing relationships with land owners at and around sites, determining land ownership boundaries and how to enforce if needed, and costs for next steps
- Added another priority site for this year – access to the Elochoman River below Beaver Creek Hatchery
- Budget increase of approximately \$3,000 to do additional surveys of sites and acquire title information. The Board agreed this project was not in conflict with the proposed amendment to HB 1865 regarding use of money for purchasing land etc.

**Action Item:** The Board and WDFW agreed the project title should be changed to “Public fishing access site viability on the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries.”

- The Board said the outcome from the work this year should be to provide information on how to move to the next steps and estimated costs associated with improving fishing access
- Approval was unanimous

## 8. New Proposals (3 proposals) - Chair

### a. Region 2

2017 Model for real-time estimates of salmon escapement based on PIT tags – Andrew Murdoch (phone)

- Proposal aims to provide in-season estimates of escapement
- The Board and WDFW staff discussed what data have been collected for this effort already
- There was a question about whether funding was sufficient and it was noted that funding for this is being supplemented by another source
- Approval was unanimous

### b. Region 5

#### i. Salmon/steelhead hooking mortality model development and Cowlitz River hooking mortality study – Ian Courter (Mount Hood Environment)/Thomas Buehrens (WDFW)

- The proposal was modified relative to the version brought to the Board in August 2016
- Although still in Cowlitz River, focus is now broader, including data collection and modeling of post-release mortality due to angling of salmon and steelhead using a variety of methods.
- Rich Turner (NMFS) provided an email indicating his approval of the work and that consultation is not needed due to only working with ad-clipped fish
- Will need WDFW permit for using barbed hooks
- Budget was reduced from ~\$180,000 to ~\$150,000 by removing pilot study to observe angler behavior in angling/handling fish
- Tacoma Power is donating time to the project
- Anglers of different skill levels will participate

- Temperature will be monitored – Cowlitz generally ranges from 32° to 70° F
  - General agreement that we should assume mortality will likely be higher than this study shows due to less involvement by novice/unconcerned anglers
  - It is likely this will not be the last hooking mortality study as one is needed in the upper river where fish may be less likely to experience mortality due to being in freshwater longer
  - There was concern about the lack of public outreach in the proposal, suggestions included developing a one-pager and/or a link to a YouTube video for field samplers to hand out to explain study
  - There was concern about the budget for fishing supplies. This was justified by the need to cover costs by obtaining equipment initially and replacing lost/damaged lures etc.
  - Proposal was approved by a vote of 7 to 2 (Tom Fritsch and Larry Hill opposed)
- ii. 2017 Improvement of WDFW's "Wallace" Public Access Site on the Cowlitz River – Cindy LeFleur
- Wildlife Program is more certain than in the past that we can move forward with this project although paperwork is not yet complete
  - This would include a parking lot, signage, garbage cans, etc.. on existing WDFW property
  - The Board was concerned that approving this project now would send the wrong message to legislators due to the new proposed amendment about developing land etc.
  - The Board voted unanimously to table the proposal at this time and it could be re-introduced at a future meeting as needed
  - If the proposal is brought forward in the future, it was requested that more detail be added to the budget (line items for gravel, fencing, etc.) and more information about partnerships

## 9. Other Business – Chair

Anthony Fritts gave a presentation on the project ‘Post-Release Survival of Yakima River spring Chinook Salmon associated with a Mark-Selective Fishery’

**Action Item:** The Board agreed that proposals should be on a biennium schedule

**Action Item:** Ed Wickersham will take over as Chair at this point

**Action Item:** Del Groat was nominated and voted in as Vice-chair

**Action Item:** It was agreed that the February 2018 meeting should start in the afternoon and continue through the following day

**Action Item:** Proposal ranking criteria should be finalized by the August Board meeting



**Action Item:** For the next February meeting, the Board agreed all proposals should be scored ahead of time and possibly each member should use Survey Monkey online program to enter and average scores.

Ann Stephenson has taken a new job with WDFW and this will be her last week in the CRSSE Administrative Coordinator role.

**Action Item:** Cindy will fill the CRSSE Administrative Coordinator vacancy (timeline undetermined).

**Action Item:** Moving forward it may be necessary to clarify somewhat the relationship between the Coordinator position and the Board.

## **10. Public Comment Period**

No public comments

## **11. Future Meeting – Chair**

- August 9, 2017; location/conference call; potential agenda items
- February 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

## **12. Adjourn 4:30 pm**