

Puget Sound Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Oversight Committee

December 10, 2008

5:00 p.m.



Room 172, Natural Resources Building, Olympia

Members in Attendance	
Dave Croonquist, PSA Mike Gilchrist, RFA Clint Muns, PSA-RFA Al Schmauder, Chambers Clover Watershed Council	Kevin Ryan, FFF/CCA Jon Lee, NOAA Harriet Richardson, SAO Polly Fischer, PSA
WDFW Staff in Attendance:	
Rich Eltrich Dan Adkins Jack Needham Jason Rothermel	Jim Jenkins Steve Thiesfeld Colleen Desselle
Members Absent:	
Tony Floor	Mike Racine (resigned)

Clint convened the meeting at 5:00

September Meeting Minutes Reviewed and Approved

Minor changes to the minutes – statement that Clint asked about the possibility of there being political issues regarding the performance audit. Dave asked this question, not Clint. Also, noted the date of the LLTK ceremony was scheduled for the 29th, not the 20th. With these changes, the minutes have been approved.

Performance Audit report - Harriet Richardson, one of three Deputy Directors from the State Auditor's Office (SAO).

This report is an update on what is going on and where the State Auditor's Office (SAO) is with the performance audit. NGT of America was contracted through the end of June. The SAO did not find the performance audit review satisfactory at the end of June. An internal decision was made to not extend the contract and to take over completion of the audit. Five people are working on the audit, each working on specific sections. They have reviewed all of the work papers and identified where additional work was needed. They are just about

done with all of that work. They expect to have a draft report to the Department by mid-January at the very latest. The information cannot be shared until after the Department has been able to do the technical review and make sure that pieces are not missing. The Department will assure that it is factual.

Regarding the possibility of this being a political issues – the answer is no. The delay was from not getting all of the information in a timely manner from NGT. The contract expired without them getting full payment, and NGT will not receive the balance of their contracted payment. The report will be completed by SAO and will be paid out of the audit account from the General Fund. The SAO has used a fair amount of the work NGT completed and expanded upon it.

There was some concern that NGT received too much money for the work they did not complete. It was suggested that there should be a performance clause with all future contracts. The SAO will have more checkpoints along the way. No payments for fieldwork will be made until they have received the reports on the fieldwork. They have learned some lessons from this and are trying to improve their processes. The SAO can review the work papers and will do that earlier in the process with future contracts. The SAO will make sure that the contractors are abiding by auditor's standards.

It was suggested that there should be more open communication regarding what is going on with the audit throughout the process. The perception was that there's something wrong when communications are not open.

When audit report is out, Harriet will be glad to come back and give the committee a full report on what NGT did, what the SAO did when she took up the process, and how they came about with their evaluation. Once made public, the audit will be posted on their web site. You can view all the working papers once it is complete, just by asking.

Budget Report – Steve Thiesfeld

Hand outs. (See attachments.) Black and white copy – tried to go through June of 2007. It is a ball park projection. Preliminary indications are that revenues are declining. The next hand out is an expansion of what Greg usually handed out. Not sure why, but this does not have the lingcod project. On the left of the page you can see all of the various programs. First three columns are the first fiscal year of the biennium ('08 completed). Allotment is the amount of money the agency put into the budget, actual expenditures, and the variance is the difference between the two. We ended up the first fiscal year \$190,000 above what we allotted. The biennial allotments (on the far right) are scheduled at \$3.2 million for all of these programs. We currently have of that allotted money is \$1.48 biennial variance. Some of the programs have a charge increase. The two sets of columns in the middle are kind of the meat and potatoes of where we are for this fiscal year. This was done two ways: one was based on the allotments that are presented. However, this does not account for the variances

we had for this first fiscal year, so if one program overspent and one program underspent, it did not account for these variances. So then I did what I call an actual base projection for this fiscal year. Biennial allotment minus what we actually spent for the first fiscal year.

Were some expenses cut back to build up our reserve because it had been shrinking? It is correct to assume that variance may have been an attempt to get back to that \$500,000. I think that could be correct. Greg showed me on the color sheet in March of '08 we actually have a negative balance. I think that is where we started making some cuts. If you look at the similar sheet (black and white) that potentially in March of next year we might have a similar issue. We are in pretty good shape. The allotment will change with the budget. Will have to make sure that we are cognizant of what we are going.

It looks like you have a pretty good surplus funding for the coordinator. What is that about? We have had discussions over the last couple years on the coordinator expenses. A while back, we raised a ruckus about paying full salary for someone who is doing this part-time, then we started to see it go the other direction. We would need to look at the actual percentage of time used to perform the duties held for coordinating these meetings to budget accordingly. This is probably what happened.

Clint asked about the phone survey and how it gets allocation with PSRFE and the total license sales. We expected that to increase slightly this year, but with the lack of a Lake Washington sockeye fishery, which was a big shot in the arm, it won't increase much. If the survey is done in a year we have that fishery, then you suddenly get more license sales, and more people fishing for salmon, then we tend to get an increase. We didn't have one this year, and they did the survey. Do we actually get the results back to see if there was an increase?

Question whether with the economy there will less people buying licenses, or more people getting hungry and getting licenses to go fishing? It was felt that anyone who fishes knows that fishing is not the most economical means for getting their fish. We will probably lose the more casual fisher. It was felt that we need to promote the opportunities out there and get more people excited about the possibility of going fishing – the casual fisher especially when there is a lot of indication that we are going to see some improvements especially in 2011-12. Instead of traveling, say to Disneyland, Canada, etc., stay in the area and go fishing. Focus should be that there is the opportunity there.

Kevin asked about cutting hatchery production to get more wild fish. We want to modify hatchery practices in order to reduce their impact on wild fish, while maintaining good levels of fishing. Don't think that cutting hatchery production is the first solution to wild fish recovery. How about modifying the fishing selectivity? Hopefully that is down the road. The new director's work is cut out to try to meet the demand for more selective fisheries and how far you can push the tribes.

Would still like to know how many licenses we are getting ready to sell? We used to be able to go online and see how many licenses were sold in each county, but when WDFW went to new license vendor, that information died in 2006. It still comes up on the web site but has not been updated. Would like to know how many licenses they are prepared to sell and be able to see what the total license sales.

Are there any other revenue sources we can come up with such as egg sales? There is some discussion that would support introduction of legislation that all license fees, all commercial excise tax fees, blanket taxes into the Wildlife Account. There is no assurance that would solve any problems, but it does take it out of that black hole called the General Fund and put it more under control. Problem with Wildlife Account is that legislatively the Department has been mandated to spend more than they are taking in so that surplus has shrunk and shrunk to a point so that it will end and it will be in a hole this year. It may two years at best to get that kind of action.

Committee Reports

Light Tackle Fishing – Kevin Ryan

Access Programs – Kevin Ryan

Had a bunch of property documents. I gave a copy to Les Johnson some months ago. He and others are talking with various fishing clubs and looking at identifying these properties, taking a look at the beaches, and maybe exercising a kind of oversight over individual beaches to adopt a beach or parts of a beach like they do with particular sections of highways. Keep them clean.

Another thing we were talking about is a particular beach - Salt Water State Park beach. The proposal was to put in a concrete underwater reef and remove the tires. Then block off a little less than 400 lineal feet to use for SCUBA and no fishing in that particular area. Over the years, we have lost a lot of beach access as a lot of tidelands and beach lands that used to be public access were sold off to private ownership. Tone is that is not a great beach for fishing, except in the north area. A sanctuary created by the reef is a good thing. Did not think there would be a big problem allowing beach fishing. There was a concern about being able to get there. The actual dive area is a couple hundred feet out.

There is a proposal to the Commission to close that beach. No one registered comments about that proposal at the last meeting. Steve passed the comments on that we did not want the beach closed, but they indicated there was no formal complaint. They wanted it in writing. Comments were made to the staff, but not the Commission. Al noted that he is a diver, and stated that there are lingcod in there. They are going to have babies. Understanding is that the dive area would be closed to fishing if the beach were left open for fishing. It is good to create precipices for the fish to protect them. It would be good to

accommodate youth fishing from the beach. Need to have a stated goal as to why to have a closure, and then when that goal is met to reopen the beach. Public should know intent and why we are doing it. This is a chance to create a partnership. Get divers out to help adopt the beach. Near-shore studies are underway at Nisqually Beach to identify at how sediment moves, where eel grasses are, where fish lay eggs. Here we could identify areas as nurseries for the rest of the beach. California is a good example that closing large areas of beaches are not the answer.

Lingcod Culture – Jon Lee

Jon presented an update on raising and tracking lingcod. Forty-eight lingcod were implanted with acoustic tags. For quality control, they were sent to WSU pathology and they came back clean and healthy. They were weighed and measured on Oct 16 and then again on the 28th. Better than thought it would be. The ones that were 300-500 grams grew as much as 30-35% of their body weight. The bigger ones grew a little less. This may be a normal growth pattern.

Then we deployed receivers to hear the tags. Have been out in the field and have not been able to gather the data for presentation, but presenting information we have to date. We have located some of these lingcod through tracking using stationary receivers and a mobile tracker. We tracked at Day Island for 7 days and found 7 of 24. Second site at Itsami - in three days we found 9 fish. We are trying to find more fish, see what the dispersal is and how the treatments affect them - if they will live to be adults, habitats, etc. When we have more numbers, we can find out more common characteristics in the areas we find them. There are more fish in the hatchery and we will be doing more yearling tag releases. April 2009 there is a question mark here because it sounds like we have the money there and it is allocated to lingcod, but don't know what the economy is going to do to this funding. Also we have been talking with Mike Racine about 2009 egg collections. The acoustic tags are good for one year. It is possible that we are tracking seals that have eaten lingcod as well. We will be monitoring. You can hear a ping during mobile tracking. Sometimes you hear the ping nice and loud, but it does not write the code from the tag. Only found about 5% of the fish. We will be searching to see if other tags show up. There may be some further out. So far, we have found 16 out of 48. We could note other tags being done by other researchers during this process, but we have not detected very many other people's fish yet.

New Business

Portland Sportsmans Show – Steve Thiesfeld

We promote WDFW at these. Tony only had salmon. Somewhere Portland showed up in the mix, and somewhere along the line of PSRFE supported the Portland show. They are asking for \$2100 to support the show. I am having a tough time justifying Portland with Puget Sound dollars. I feel it is not appropriate. Do we agree with this funding? Motion

was moved and seconded to not fund the show. No opposition. Steve indicated he would advise region 5 that PSRE would not fund.

2008 Hatchery Returns – Rich Eltrich, others

State & WDFW Budget Issues – Steve Thiesfeld

How to survive this biennium with the short falls? Phil gave an overview of our budget. First forecast was minus \$3-4 billion, now up to \$5-6 billion statewide. \$28 billion (~ 15%). \$348 million, the rest is dedicated – not able to redistribute. \$178 billion statewide – this could have double whammy. We were looking at \$20 million of \$178 billion, now looking at \$40 million reduction next biennium for agency. The Department is reprioritizing. 70% of the reductions is employees. This is not going to make much of a dent in the \$178 billion. Will be approximately 130 permanent employees affected. What does agency do for state's economy - \$90 million per year. \$178 million were state funds and \$170 million were dedicated.

North of Falcon and selective fisheries proposals for 2009-10 – Steve Thiesfeld

Hand-out. Page 2, tables 2 and 3. (See attachment.) Current program where we do/don't have fisheries open. Non-selective are white boxes; dark are closed. We met with the marine and anadromous advisory group, the selective fishery cabinet, and NoF – on the other side of page – candidate fisheries to consider for next year – group (not WDFW) possible areas. Would like more access to Green River Chinook – tribes believe we are ahead of them, catch record cards not a good estimate. Believe allocation units all of South Sound. Step back if Nisqually tribal harvest hadn't skyrocketed would they still want watershed-by-watershed? Dave Troutt believes they are extinct. Wanted selective fisheries in 10 and 11 to protect coho, but Nisqually tribe wanted nothing to do with it. How can they say that when a fresh run had been found? We are not managing for wild coho in South Sound, we are managing for hatchery coho. This is very similar to something presented previously. How would the public feel about this last year? Think they would appreciate – overall catch in Hood Canal is small compared to South Puget Sound. It should have been proposed – some things get put off when presented late – mostly due to not fully understanding the issue. Looking at what they can do – will have third workshop.

Recreational Fishing

Does it have to be catch and kill? Catch and release? Can it be watch the fish? Spent a lot of money enhancing area, but received no fish. "Watchable Wildlife." Can we change the concept? Maybe teach the public there are more aspects than just fishing. Attract kids, foreigners, others. Get ways to be able to see spawning fish. People need to understand we will not have large masses of fish. Let jacks go upstream? Let some go through. Get them

to understand reality of fish. This would be a massive education in process. Get buy-in that this is a great way to enjoy the fish.

Coded-Wire Tagging – Steve Thiesfeld

Old Business

Status Report on Chinook Culture – Rich Eltrich, others

Jim put together a 2007 program releases out of Chambers Creek watershed showing numbers of fish release, sizes, tagging information and the 2008 brood this fall and tracking information. Another is a preliminary tribal harvest and hatchery escapement. Steve asked me to put together the escapement for rivers that have some PSRE activities going on except the Nisqually since that is part of the South Sound complex. Those numbers are reflected in that sheet. Everybody met their egg take programs and there is a lot surplus at some of the hatcheries. Recreational data is not available for a couple of years. It would be nice to be able to rotate tagging the subyearling production at Chambers Creek and Nisqually. Transfer around 400,000 and expand every three years if want to go elsewhere in Puget Sound. Need to get the Nisqually Tribe involved in helping with the tagging.

Lower returns for a number of stocks, but this is not a crisis. A number of the stocks have done well.

Tribal fishing has been increasing in three identified areas. Nooksack is one of them.

Suggestion was made to keep control groups and have some done every other year or so. Find out which ones we do tag and which ones are not – do not increase the tagging, but switch among the groups.

Coho Tagging – still working with tribe – nothing to report

Status of Appointments – Steve Thiesfeld

Director resignation hit the papers last week. Affects that we had submitted recommends for selection by him. Those on Committee who wanted to stay were requested to continue. No decision as of yet. Steve has asked to schedule time with Phil (interim director) next week. To sit on resumes are cross-parallel to the audit – convey sense to Phil that we need to benefit those who made submissions. Koenings had expressed a desire for new blood. Don't know what Phil has to say about it.

Development of Long-Term Strategic Plan - all

Mike asked if someone wants to lead or do we just ignore it? Clint's sense that it went to a different direction than it started – go back – too big – too general. Is it something we want to spend more time on? Legislature has a pretty specific direction - access, delayed release,

hatchery production, budget allocation, catch models, streamline enhancement, public awareness, management of predators, etc. Al asked a question regarding enhancing recreational fisheries – seems we focus on Chinook. What about coho? Restriction on expanding coho production is a concern because we don't know what is going on with them. Don't want to crank up production if not going to survive. Rich indicated listing for coho in South Puget Sound – probably can't get coho production in South Sound. Treaty with tribes – Puget Sound Management Plan – look at managing watershed-by-watershed basis – would be costly. One year on lingcod – took a while to get Legislature to let us focus on them. We need to push it – possibility of doing more. There are too many questions on coho. Al asked if we could brainstorm on where we are going – present to Director what we want to move forward. Clint presented salmon/steelhead management plan was done by non-profit. Where are we on new Puget Sound Management Plan? We were supposed to have the draft audit at the end of this month and it has been moved to end of next month. As far as working on the framework – a lot of effort at this point? Go back to earlier outline and present to new director.

105100 – improvement – everything takes life cycles. How to move with coho if a lot of unanswered questions? Al suggested putting coho in Chambers to see what happens. Experiment – what is management objective for South Puget Sound? Rich indicated that the managers need to make the decision. PSRE gets a piece of pie from license sales. A portion of each saltwater fishing license goes to PSRFE and the Department states only Puget Sound. Need to see what comes of audit report.

Al asked if some asks you how you rate where their money is being utilized. The answer is not simple, but use of coded-wire tags has a lot to do with it. Need to consider all factors such as floods, etc.

Steve stated the revenue accounts for \$1.6 million per year. Jim asked what you would do with it. Estimate is well above what we obtain. How do we do more when our hands are tied? If hatcheries were up to code it would be easier to see benefits. How bad off would we be without this program?

Al asked if the average angler would know what we are trying to accomplish. Report to them what we are doing, how we are doing it, what our future plans are – inform the public. Provide a brochure. Mike stated PR efforts could help or hinder. You have to know who your opponents are – something on the web site with easy access, easy to find – this would be a good venue. We have to be able to indicate what it is we know. Mike is afraid of framework – could create more problems. Clint gets a lot of phone calls re: expansion complaints. Is good to be able to know what people are thinking and explain our side. Would be able to get the information out. However the downside could be wrong information – need more promotional ideas, but better if we had a full-time coordinator. Need someone to put positive realistic spin on it.

Rich stated that when this program started in the 1990s, there were no selective fisheries, no ESA. Things have changed. Fishery mind-set is also changing. Opportunity as opposed to catch is more important for most people. Dave stated the Legislature would probably come through and say you can't move fish around – much like problem of blackmouth – plant in one area and show up somewhere else. Marked or wild – Flint reg – bring up next meeting. Start with basic, more simplistic process. Keep it simple.

Conclusion

Scheduling of the next meeting:

Requested Action Items:

-

Topics for Future Discussion:

-

Next Meeting: March 4, 5:00 p.m., Lakewood Hatchery (tentative)

Lingcod Enhancement

- 1) Collect eggs and rear fish
- 2) Release and track
 - Subyearlings
 - Yearlings

Subyearling Releases

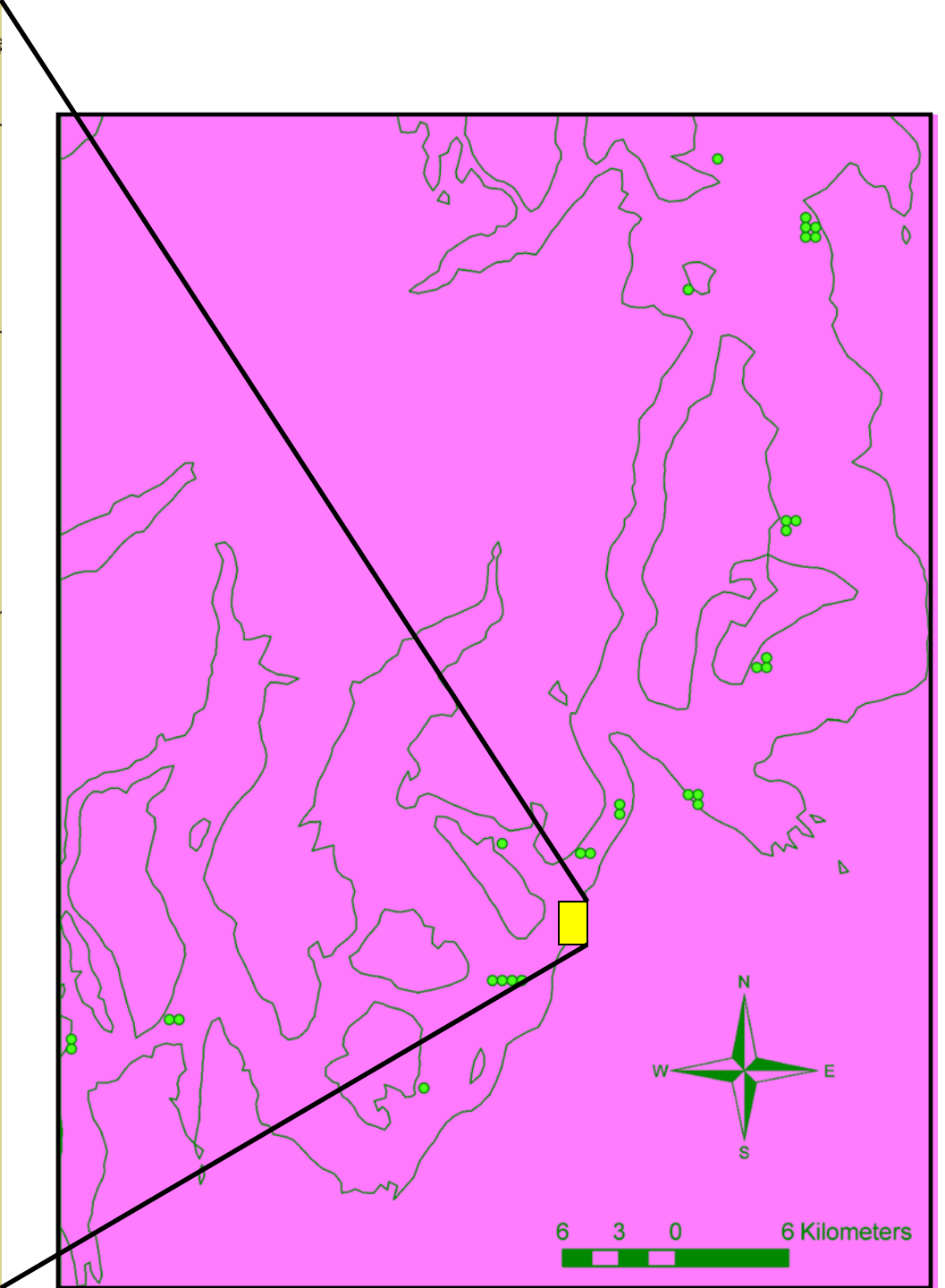
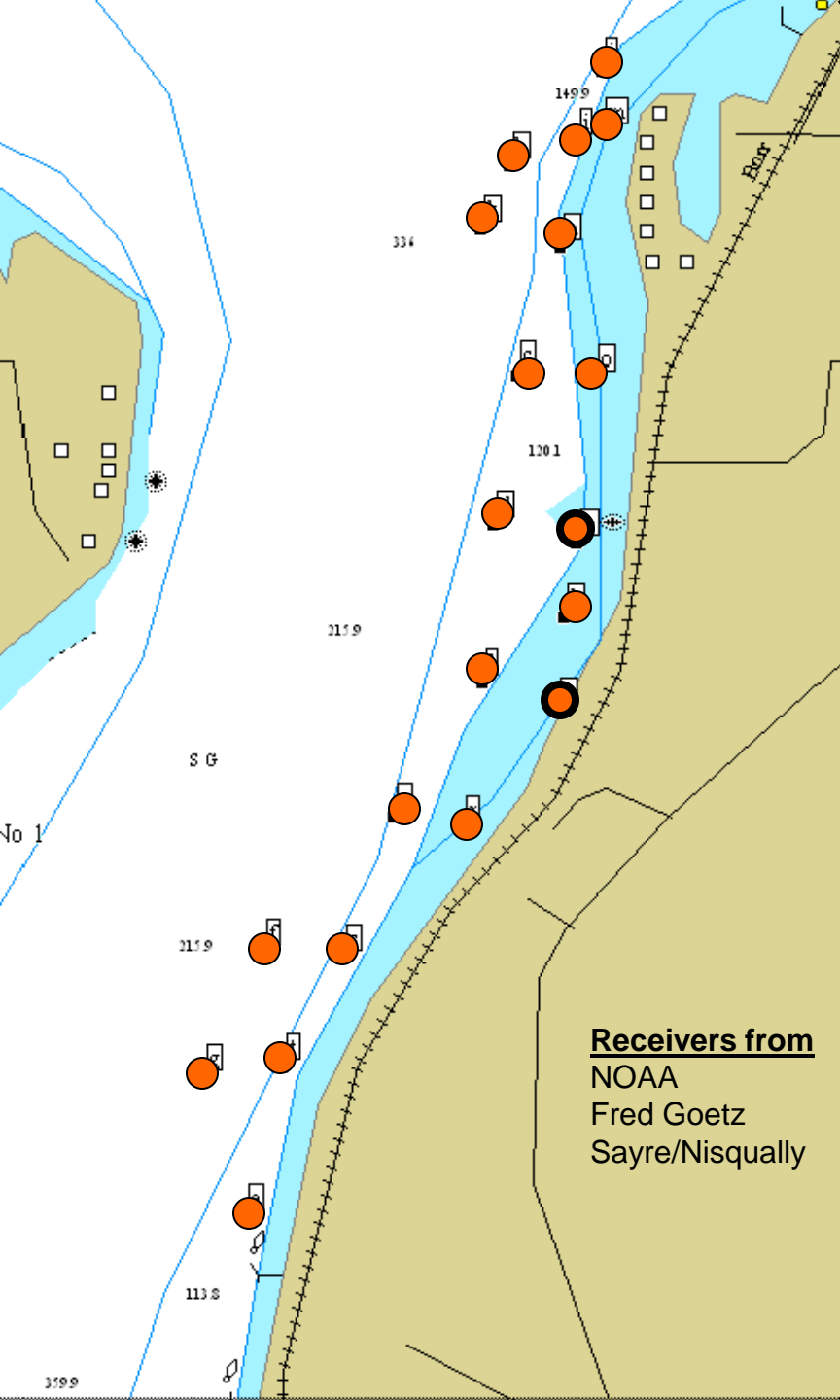


OCTOBER

- 1) Implant acoustic tags (48)
- 2) Quality control
 - Health
 - Growth
- 3) Deploy receivers

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

- 4) Release and track



Subyearling Releases

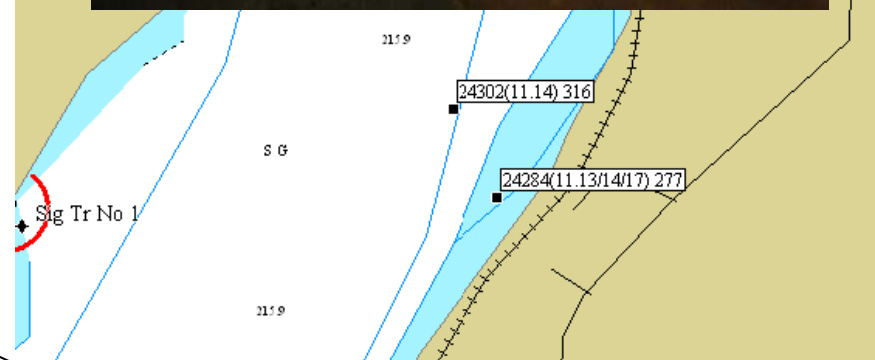
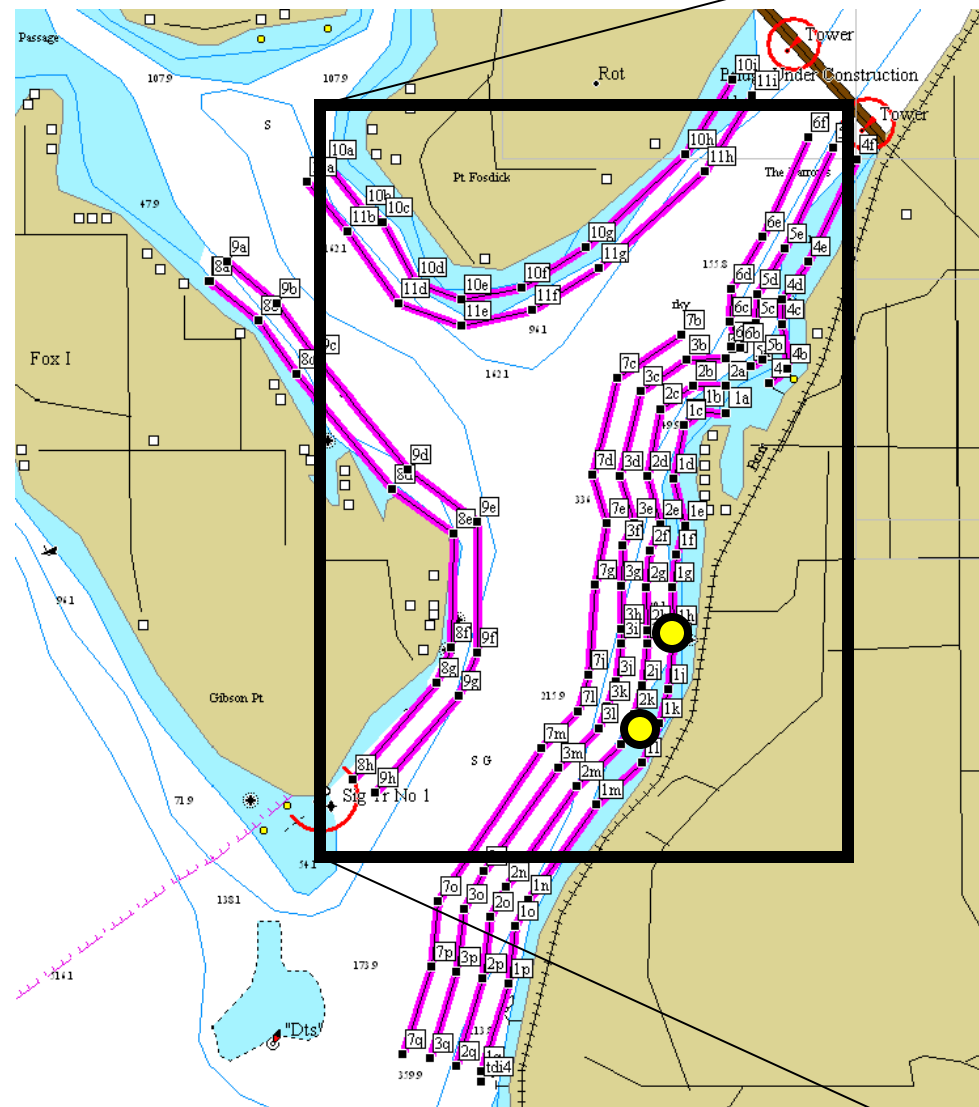


OCTOBER

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Future

- Find more fish
 - Dispersal
 - Recruitment
 - Habitat preferences
- Yearling releases in April 2009?
- 2009 egg collections (Mike Racine)