

BRCC Members

As there wasn't a request for an in-person meeting or conference call in September, below is an update of the past month's Baker River Project Resource Group activities.

The next BRCC meeting is scheduled for October 23rd, 9:30 – 2:00. It will be held in the newly constructed historic Carpenter Shop at PSE's Snoqualmie Falls plant in Snoqualmie. Details will be forthcoming in the next couple of weeks.

If you have items for the BRCC meeting, please send them to me by October 7th.

Aquatic Resource Group (ARG)

The ARG met September 10th at the PSE Skagit Service Center. The next meeting is scheduled for January 14th at the PSE Skagit Service Center.

Plans

- No new updates in September on aquatic-related plans. Nearly all the aquatic-related plans have been through the ARG at this point and most have been approved by FERC.

Reports

PSE submitted the 2012 article report for SA 103 Upstream Fish Passage and SA 104 Connectivity to the ARG with comments due by September 27th. This fall's reports will include SA 101 Fish Propagation (due Oct. 31), SA 105 Downstream Fish Passage and SA 106 Flow Implementation (both due November 30). Plans and reports are located at: http://pse.com/aboutpse/HydroLicensing/Documents/Plans_and_Studies/Plan_and_Study_List.pdf

Fisheries

The 2013 outmigration numbers were reviewed at the September ARG meeting. First-year operation of the LB FSC more than quadrupled the previous sockeye outmigration; UB FSC sockeye outmigrants exceeded the previous record by 27%; and the overall (combined) outmigration of 828,183 exceeded the previous record by 51%.

The 2013 LB FSC biological evaluation study was completed. Preliminary re-capture rate was ~92% for the PIT coho experimental group. The draft report will be submitted prior to the January ARG meeting.

PSE presented the season's results of weekly smolt morphological collected data and numerical outcomes, discussed as the study approach for SA 101c2 at the ARG meeting.

Lower Baker Unit 4 Commissioning: PSE is targeting Oct. 15 to complete commissioning and begin operating according to Aquatics Table 1, about a year ahead of license

schedule. PSE is coordinating operations now to be at the required reservoir elevations by Oct. 15. PSE will have to complete the following: testing of the facility control system to verify it will operate to meet the new downramping and instream flow requirements, additional mechanical testing of the new unit, and a program and test of the warnings for flow excursions. PSE showed the ARG an example of an email notification that will be generated and sent for any deviations from Lower Baker downramp and instream flow constraints that require notification within 24 hours.

Daily Pool Level Change Update: PSE will be working with USFS to have an approved approach by May 2014. PSE will provide a status update at the January 2014 ARG meeting.

Spawning Beach Decommissioning: Decommissioning site work continues. Critical work, including all in-water work, was completed by August 16. Asbestos abatement began August 26 and took about a week to complete. Beach 1 demolition commenced, and they are on target to complete construction by November this year. The ARG will get an update about the completion at the January ARG meeting.

Hatchery and Spawning Beach Operations: PSE sent the ARG a final project report of the completed repairs at the hatchery headworks and summarized the work at the September ARG meeting.

The hatchery and spawning beach are fully operating, and the facility fulfilled the allotment of sockeye adult broodstock. Collection is based on the Fish Co-managers loading schedule and for the season met the 6,000 target (2,235 were supplied to the Spawning Beach and 3,846 to the hatchery adult holding ponds). The inventory of juvenile fish at the hatchery consists of approximately 117,000 sockeye and 93,000 coho fingerlings in raceways, intended for the extended rearing program.

Upstream Fish Trap Operations: The adult sockeye return is nearly done. 12,438 adult sockeye have been counted at the Upstream Fish Trap through September 25th. WDFW estimates total run after factoring in pre-trap harvest may reach 18,000. Coho numbers to the trap total 346 and will be building to a peak in October. Of these, 21 coho were selected for hatchery for broodstock. Selected coho will total 200 as the broodstock goal this season. There was a minor change to the forward looking Upstream Fish Trap Protocol for Chinook ad-clip coded wire tag fish and for collected Atlantic salmon.

Other license-aquatics plan implementation activities:

- SA 101: The fish co-managers will support the development of an MOU mechanism for implementing the SA 101 nutrient enhancement funding. PSE is working on a draft of an MOU.
- SA 108 Gravel: PSE reported that this will be the second year of gravel monitoring and conducted gravel bar surveys in September (Wohlman pebble counts and subsurface armor ratio).

- SA 109 Large Woody Debris: PSE distributed the allocation guidance protocol for managing requests for Large Woody Debris (LWD) following review and comment period. PSE made some first collections of wood this summer and will provide an inventory in time for the next round of SA 505 proposals.
- Article 110 Shoreline Erosion: PSE has been working with USFS on a project to stabilize the bank near Swift Creek campground. They are looking to modify the project design, with construction tentatively slated for October 2014.
- Article 505 Aquatic Riparian Habitat: The RFP process for round three has begun. PSE is looking to November 12 for an Article 505 Aquatic Riparian Habitat Working Group meeting.

Terrestrial Resources Implementation Group (TRIG)

The TRIG met on September 5th at the Skagit Service Center. The next meeting will be held on December 5th. Discussion during the meeting included:

- The SA 514 Effectiveness Monitoring Implementation Procedures document draft was discussed at length, and additional revisions were proposed. Also, a summary of the song bird monitoring under SA 514 was presented.
- Updates were given on botanical resources, including weed treatments, surveys of weed sites, and information from the *Carex flava* census. The Carex Working Group found 395 stems, which was greater than the 362 baseline count.
- Loon surveys were summarized, with loons observed but not on the platforms. The Noisy Creek loon platform is missing, so we will need to determine steps for replacing it.
- A summary of the year's osprey surveys was presented, with 6-7 active osprey nests, most of which are located on the modified trees that are along Lake Shannon.
- Acquisition of additional properties is ongoing, with a new property proposed to the group for consideration. The group agreed that the property would be worth pursuing and authorized PSE to conduct a pre-acquisition survey following the protocols we have previously used.

Other Terrestrial activities that occurred during September:

- The 5-day Notice of Operation for the new Alder Creek access road segment (road BI-36-10) to be constructed on the west parcel was approved by the DNR on September 3rd. The new access road segment was constructed on September 20-23, and was closed off at the property line with ecology blocks and cable. A gate will likely be installed next year. The road improvement work at Burpee Hill (two rock lined fords/crossings and 5 areas of gravel placement) was done during the week of September 16th.
- The SA 514 Effectiveness Monitoring Implementation Procedures document draft was revised and sent to the TRIG for a 2-week notice of decision for adoption on

September 13th. We have received one “nay” vote, and do not have consensus for adoption of the document. We will likely have another SA 514 teamlet meeting to work on additional revisions to the document some time in October.

Cultural Resources Advisory Group (CRAG)

The CRAG last met in August. The next CRAG meeting is scheduled for November 20th at the Skagit Service Center in Burlington.

There were no CRAG activities to report in September.

Recreation Resource Group (RRG)

The RRG did not meet in September. The next RRG meeting will be held on October 15th, 9:00 a.m. to noon, followed by the Law Enforcement Planning (LEP) meeting starting at 12:30.

- All 300 series 2012 annual reports went out for review on July 31. Agency reviews were completed and comments and responses are being added to the reports.
- PSE will be submitting the SA 305, Lower Baker Developed Recreation Plan and the SA 312, Developed Recreation Monitoring and Funding Plan to FERC for approval by October 17, 2013.
- For SA 302 (Aesthetics Management), PSE will begin a selection process for a plant supplier (nursery) for the Upper Baker Screening plan. It is scheduled for implementation in October 2014. PSE’s terrestrial botanist will assist with this effort.
- The SA 301 (Recreation Management) draft 2012 Annual Report will be ready for review by December 31, 2013.
- The sockeye fishery season ended September 2nd.
- The Kulshan Campground had a good season and closed for fee collection on September 2nd. The campground remains open year round.
- All Baker celebration events were a success.
- Pam Garland, Doug Bruland, and Cory Ertel are working to develop a tour program specific to Baker River.