



September 11, 2012 / 9 a.m. – 11:00 a.m./ WebEx, Conference Call

Baker River Project License Implementation

Aquatic Resources Group

Team Leader: Arnie Aspelund (PSE), arnie.aspelund@pse.com

PRESENT

Jacob Venard, Nick Verretto, Arnie Aspelund, Cary Feldmann, Doug Bruland, Tom Flynn, Caitlin Faulkner, Lynn Thompson, (PSE); Bob Helton (Citizen); Brock Applegate and Kevin Kurras (WDFW); Chuck Ebel (USACE); Lyn Wiltse (facilitator, PDSA Consulting).

DECISIONS – none today

ARG DATES: Every other month, alternating in-person and phone/web meetings:

Oct. 9 (plan to cancel placeholder), Oct. 24 (if combined with BRCC meeting (see below), Nov. 13 (in-person meeting with SA 105 updates), Dec. 11 (plan to cancel placeholder (see 2013 schedule below).

BRCC MEETING DATE: October 24, in person, possibly combined with ARG meeting (in lieu of October 9 meeting) at PSE Snoqualmie Service Center in Snoqualmie.

ARG / TRIG 505 MEETING: November 1, in person, pre-proposal meeting at Skagit Service Center in Burlington.

2013 MEETING DATES: Arnie suggests we continue to earmark second Tuesdays and move to quarterly in-person meetings [revised 9/11/12]: January 8, March 12, June 11 and September 10.

SAFETY MOMENT

Arnie reviewed tips for ergonomics and desk set-up. Other reminders were to watch for kids in the street as they are back at school, remember eye and ear protection before climbing ladder to clean gutters, and to allow extra stopping distance as oil has accumulated on road surfaces due to a last of rain over the last several weeks.

ACTION ITEM

- All Send comments to Nick on SA 105: Downstream Fish Passage Implementation Plan by September 18.
- Arnie Confirm next ARG meeting date and send out to all.

PREVIOUS - STILL RELEVANT ACTION ITEMS

- Jed Work with Craig to provide a report of IHN sampling process and this year's outbreak (no IHN detected among small sampling of out-migrating smolts).
- Stan Coordinate co-managers to update the adult trap protocol for sea-run cutthroat.
- Co-Mgrs Send a draft Fish Production Plan to Arnie ASAP, as per FPDF. PSE is requesting written direction from the co-managers on how to proceed as soon as possible as they are already collecting coho broodstock. Kevin reported that we are proceeding with the status quo.
- All Review / update the ARG representation list for your organization (ongoing).

UPDATE ON PREVIOUS ACTION ITEMS

- Arnie reported that the FIP has been finalized and PSE will submit the report to FERC this week.
- Doug reported that, after additional review, he was unable to discern contributing causes that led to the unusually high percentage of return from the Brand-U Coho release.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We welcomed PSE's new Manager of Licensing, Tom Flynn. Tom has been with PSE four years, working in the area of NERC compliance. Prior to that, he worked over 20 years in the area of environmental compliance. He has been working with each of the Baker Team Leaders as he comes up to speed on license-related issues and activities. His focus is to provide PM oversight and ensure we are efficiently and effectively implementing the license articles. Welcome Tom!

BRCC UPDATE

Tom reported that the next BRCC meeting is set for October 24 at the Snoqualmie Service Center. He has requested suggestions for meeting topics. In the meantime, all should continue to reserve the fourth Wednesday of each month for BRCC conference calls as needed. In-person meetings are scheduled semi-annually (spring and fall).

As per the email he sent out the end of August on Baker license-related activities, Tom reported the TRIG is looking at viable properties for acquisition and has performed pre-acquisition surveys for three properties. They have also conducted a rare plant survey at Spawning Beaches 1-3.

The CRAG is working on preserving the exterior of the Baker Club House. The now decommissioned gulper has been moved to the edge of the lake. The CRAG is waiting for an MOA to be signed with SHPO in order to begin demolition.

Tom also reported that PSE will be taking a planned outage at Baker starting Sept. 15. Though four weeks are scheduled, they will likely finish a week or so early. Flows will be sustained during this period from the leakage coming through the dam. PSE has to do this penstock work in connection with the new powerhouse construction.

Tom also referenced an excursion email that PSE sent out a few weeks ago. He reiterated PSE's commitment to open and timely communications of such events. Lower Baker Unit 3 tripped off line unexpectedly and this caused the flows to the river to be very low. He noted that with the new Unit 4 online this would not have occurred. Unit 4 should be online by August of next year.

BAKER FISH HATCHERY OPERATIONS

There was much rejoicing as this was a record year for adults returning and also a record year for smolts out. All broodstock goals have been met!

While the sockeye broodstock goal was met, Kevin reported that the mortality was a little higher than usual. There was no IHN. Most of the mortality seemed to be due to physical injury, fungus, scratches and tears in the sides of the fish, some possible net marks. Otters and harbor seals have been taking a toll as well. The WDFW pathologist will arrive September 12 to analyze the causes. Note: Trap mortality was normal.

There are not currently many fish at the hatchery (238K) excluding adults. Doug walked the group through the Baker Hatchery Fish Inventory Spreadsheet:

- Raceway 1: 152,800 sockeye are being held. They have completed approximately 45% of the sockeye ad-clipping. Some will be released in late October when the water temperatures drop to those at the hatchery. Others will be used for the biological studies in Lake Shannon in 2013.
- Raceway 4: 65,100 coho are being held. They were adipose fin-clipped, and will be released in the spring for the biological studies for 2013.

- Circulars 6 and 7: 20,000 rainbow trout are being held for spring planting in Depression Lake and also charity events.
- AI Ponds: The sockeye broodstock goals are met. They have 2,744. They are doing weekly formalin treatments for fish in the AI ponds.
- Spawning Beach: The spawning beach goals are met. They have 3,399. They are coloring up nicely and are getting close to spawning.

SPAWNING BEACH 1-3 DECOMMISSIONING

Lynn Thompson has been *promoted* to become PSE's Chief Dam Safety Engineer. She introduced Caitlin Faulkner as the new PM for the spawning *beaches* decommissioning project. Caitlin has been with PSE for over a year and has a history working as associate PM with Jim Hogan on the new Lower Baker FSC. She and Lynn will be meeting with Jeremy in the near future to help with the transition as she assumes Lynn's project manager duties for the spawning *beaches* decommissioning. *Caitlin* has also been tapped to work on the flood wall and plunge pool projects as well.

PSE and Anchor QEA have been working on an alternatives assessment report for decommissioning of Spawning Beaches 1-3 which will document the basis for moving forward. The report reviews all the alternatives considered and summarizes alternative 5, which the ARG agreed represents the right direction for the project. There is consensus within the ARG to move forward with taking alternative 5 design to advance levels of design. Caitlin will be meeting with the USFS in the next few weeks to discuss how to move forward. PSE would like to be in a position to conduct work during the construction window mid September of 2013. The Forest Service has final approval; the Settlement Agreement and the Forest Service's approach gives all signatories the opportunity to provide input to the process through the ARG. The report will be distributed to ARG members when it is complete.

LOWER BAKER FSC DEPLOYMENT

Caitlin walked us through some photos of the deployment which ended up being close to two weeks due to issues with the narrow boat launch and the width of the FSC. It is being moved today to its final location and should be in place by September 14 with mooring complete the following week.

The NTS was also deployed via the boat launch on July 30. A tug boat pulled it to its temporary mooring location on Aug. 2. *The NTS has been lowered into it's normal position in the lake.*

The guide nets are set to be onsite in October. The commissioning will occur in the late September / early October timeframe. Screen balancing tests are scheduled to occur in early November and the endurance testing is set for the end of this year. The LB FSC is still on track to be operational by March 1, 2013. The last transport vessel is being delivered today. So far they are still within the original budget.

FISH FACILITY OPERATIONS UPDATES

New records for both juvenile out-migration and adult sockeye returns were set this year.

Upper and Lower Baker Juvenile Outmigration Update:

The juvenile out-migration season has concluded and the downstream passage facilities have been shut down. A look at the numbers indicate that 2012 set new records for highest single day (94,244 at UB vs 85,335 in 2010), UB sockeye (452,612 vs 435,297 in 2010), total sockeye (469,919 vs 436,587 in 2010), and total combined (546,707 vs 525,237 in 2010). The breakdown was 470,000 sockeye and 75,000 coho. Doug reported they ran at 1,000 cfs for most of the season, dropping to 500 cfs after the peak. Subsampling (direct transport of a percentage of the fish) was conducted on the two highest-run days. The record for highest single day of 94,244 was collected on May 6, 2012.

Reservoir Migration Studies at Upper Baker: Coho- 57% in freezebrand group at Blue Tarp was very high, also, 80% at West Pass Dike. Sockeye: Blue Tarp: Ad clip 60% and LV 72%. Spring release value vs. fall release value: There was discussion around which protocols are best to use so we can effectively differentiate

fish just released from the hatchery (as fed fry) from those released after three months of rearing and after six months of rearing. They are looking into ways to achieve this distinction.

Upstream Trap Returns:

Nearly 28,000 sockeye were collected at the trap this year. We are waiting for updated harvest information from the fish co-managers to revise the total terminal area sockeye. Preliminary pre-trap harvest information received from WDFW indicated approximately 19,000, making the total run approximately 47,000.

Sockeye to the hatchery	2,752
Sockeye to the spawning beach	3,407
Sockeye to Baker Lake	17,054
Total Sockeye to Baker R. Trap	27,950 (highest ever)

Daily sockeye numbers are near the end and daily coho run numbers are expected to start picking up. Doug reported they are getting 10 or fewer coho/day so far.

UPDATE ON PLANS

Arnie reviewed the following highlights from the Baker Project Aquatic Resources Plans and Reports:

106: Flow Implementation Plan

ARG review is completed. This is being sent to FERC shortly.

105: Downstream Fish Passage Implementation Plans

Nick reported these plans are out for ARG review. Comments are due to Nick by September 18.

103: Upstream Fish Passage Article Report

This is out for ARG review with comments due by September 28.

104: Connectivity Article Report

This is out for ARG review with comments due by September 28.

101: Fish Propagation Article Report

Report due to ARG October 31.

106: Flow Implementation Article Report

Report due to ARG November 30.

All the other annual reports have been through ARG review and will be sent to the ARG as part of the overall 102 Report in January, 2013.

Article 108: Gravel

Jacob reported that monitoring (pebble counts and cross section surveys) will begin September 12. This will establish the baseline from which to evaluate progress.

Article 109: Large Woody Debris

PSE has received verbal agreement (which is being formalized with the Real Estate Department) from the land owner to store the LWD adjacent to the sea plane launch area – end of West Pass Dike. They will gather wood from the end of the lake and haul it down to that location.

Article 505 Aquatic Riparian Habitat

Jacob explained they have been doing a lot of work on process improvement this summer. They have improved the notification and selection process by making objectives more clear. This morning, Jacob sent out a notification email outlining distinct expectations for pre-proposals which are due October 15. This will

continue to be a work in progress every year. They have also made some minor changes to the project proposal form and the implementation plan (a working document). It will be out for review soon and will be followed by a more formal version for comments. There will be a meeting today in Burlington with the Skagit Land Trust to see if they might be able to work with this group in a manner similar to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

The next ARG/TRIG meeting will take place on November 1. Each member will be asked to comment and give feedback to presenters on how to proceed. Note: As reported at the last meeting, PSE is still working on internal accounting protocols (capital vs. O&M).

AGENDA TOPICS FOR NEXT ARG MEETING*

*If needed, an October meeting may be combined with the BRCC meeting on October 24 in Snoqualmie and possible topics may include:

- Hot Topics, License Process Update
- Update on PSE talks with Skagit Count re flood risk reduction / GI
- Update on Baker Fish Hatchery Operations
- Decommissioning of Spawning Beach 1-3
- Lower Baker FSC Update
- Other License Implementation Updates
- Evaluate the Meeting, Set Agenda for November 13 In-Person Meeting

PARKING LOT

- Sampling rate for Baker Hatchery coho needs to be addressed.
- PSE will propose a sub-sampling protocol.

MEETING EVALUATION

- Small meeting attendance
- Phone difficult at times