

Baker River Project License Implementation

Aquatic Resources Group

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

PRESENT

Doug Bruland, Jory Oppenheimer, Irena Netik, Arnie Aspelund, Cary Feldmann, Nick Verretto (by phone), Jacob Venard (PSE); Bob Helton (Citizen); Stan Walsh (SRSC); Jeff McGowan; Kara Symonds; Dan Berentsen (Skagit County); Steve Fransen, by phone (NMFS); Greta Movassaghi, by phone, (USFS); Jed Varney, Brett Barkdull, Steve Stout, Kevin Kurras, Brock Applegate (WDFW); Chuck Ebel, Dan Johnson Hannah Hadley, Charyl Barrow, Margaret Chang (USACE), Craig Olson (NWIFC); Daryl Hamburg (Diking District 12); Tom Van Gelder (Trout Unlimited); Lyn Wiltse and David Roberts (PDSA Consulting).

DECISIONS – none today

HOT TOPICS

The spawning beach de-commissioning new project manager is Lynn Thompson. Scott Williams has taken a position at PSE in Energy Efficiency.

ARG MEETING DATES: Assume Tuesdays, alternating in-person and phone/web meetings:

June 12, July 10, Aug. 14, Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11. June and July will be in-person due to planned agenda content. August may become a conference call.

Website: You can find Baker River documents available to the resource groups such as resource group plans, reports, meeting notes, etc., via PSE.com:

<http://pse.com/aboutpse/HydroLicensing/Pages/Baker-River-Licensing.aspx>

ACTION ITEMS

- Arnie Post Dan's GI presentation on the Baker License Implementation website.
- Irena Coordinate a meeting with the USACE, Skagit County, and PSE to discuss the analysis of storage alternatives and costs.
- Doug Meet with Jed, Craig, Kevin, and Nick to perform a root cause analysis of fry mortality.
- Stan See that the co-managers discuss fish production goals.
- All Invite new members of your organization who will become involved with the Baker license implementation activities to attend the BRCC meeting on May 30. It is a great way to get them quickly up to speed on the spirit and content of the Settlement Agreement.

PREVIOUS - STILL RELEVANT - ACTION ITEMS

- Cary Create and disseminate single schedule that spans all Baker License Implementation Resource Groups.
- Cary Send out finalized report on repairs made and lessons learned for Upstream Fish Trap.
- Co-Mgrs Send a draft Fish Production Plan to Arnie ASAP, as per FFPF. (Co-managers reported still making progress, they have been meeting.) Discussions taking place, report in the works.
- All Review / update the ARG representation list for your organization (ongoing)

ANNOUNCEMENTS / SAFETY MINUTE

Arnie pointed out the First Aid station and fire exits. He also reminded all to call 811 before you begin those various excavation projects involving digging. It's the law to know what's below before you dig. Utilities pay for the service.

NOTES

Meeting notes of the March 13 meeting were approved as submitted. They will be posted on the Baker website.

BRCC UPDATE

Cary reported that the Baker River Coordinating Committee (BRCC) will meet again at the PSE Skagit Service Center in Burlington on May 30th. Cary has requested suggestions for agenda items. He will send out the draft agenda in the next week or so.

Updates from other Resource Groups

- TRIG – Baseline studies to understand what is out on the ground. As management plans are implemented will monitor. April 30th report went to FERC. All reports sent out to ARG on DVD.
- RRG – Will meet again in June to discuss how to be best prepared for the season. There will be a focus on law enforcement and how to best deal with another strong sockeye fishery.
- CRAG – Last meeting on April 4 included a field trip of the project area. PSE must protect the historical side abutments of the dam. They plan to build a wall to protect structures during highest flows. They have been working with consultants and found there is still an effect.

UPDATE ON SKAGIT GENERAL INVESTIGATION

Dan Johnson is the Project Manager for the Skagit GI. He explained that the Corps has initiated a new "Reset" for each of the GIs underway. This is a result of engaging with Portland and DC – coordinating the activities of the Skagit GI. They recognize that a Basin-wide study is only way to find a solution. They are currently approximately a third of the way through the feasibility scoping meetings. The new directive calls for no more than 3 years; no more than \$3 million, resulting in a report that is no more than 3 inches thick!

Dan walked us through a PowerPoint that explained that the GI is a flood risk evaluation that results in risk based decisions to focus time and money.

General investigation results in 35% design – this goes to DC for decision to move forward or not

Pre-engineering results in 65% design

Construction general – 100% design, construction

Schedule:

Public outreach April and May 2012 with cities and open house for public

Final alternatives and tentatively selected plan March 2013

Public outreach on final plan March 2014

Measures are strategies that decrease flood risk – used to build alternatives. They currently have identified 6 conceptual alternatives that will be analyzed. It is very likely these will change. The measures will be building blocks. New measures will be considered if appropriate. Interior drainage needs to be evaluated. Completeness, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Acceptability are all factors to evaluate measures. The cost share is 65/35 (Federal/Local).

Alternatives being considered:

1. No action
2. Non-structural
3. Joe Leary Slough Bi-pass
4. Swinomish/Avon Bi-pass

5. Increased urban area protection
6. System-wide level setback

Discussion included the following:

What considerations need to go into the dam operation? What additional studies are needed for the Lower Baker storage? How will draw-downs work with the minimum/maximum flow requirements in the license? How does that affect sockeye production? How will the Corps help with other studies identified by ARG?

It is important to keep the dialogue moving so issues can be identified. GI needs the ARG's help to pull all the work from the past and what is needed for the future and bundle under the GI. The Corps is looking at scenarios for storage.

There is a need for a coordination meeting with PSE, County and COE as soon as possible to develop a plan for how the storage analysis process will move forward.

ARG members requested the opportunity to be kept in the loop – including being able to review the plan.

PSE will evaluate what they can do and how they can do it, then determine what it will cost. The Corps will look at the overall cost of the GI with all the components included. They can't make a decision until this kind of information is generated. PSE needs to address fairness of customers across their service area.

The Corps will prepare a check-off sheet for tasks that must be completed for the GI. They will share with ARG who will keep this topic as part of the monthly agenda. The presentation from today will be posted on the Baker License Implementation website.

PROGRESS ON LOWER BAKER FSC CONSTRUCTION

Nick provided slides and overview of pier construction, barges, screening and schedule. The launch of FSC is now set for early July. It is still on track for being operational in March of 2013.

The Fish Passage Technical Working Group was dissolved as of their April meeting. Members will continue to participate in relevant discussions through the ARG meetings from this point forward. Management issues in the future need ARG review. PSE will ensure that Ed Meyer (NMFS) remains appropriately involved.

Nick reported an increase in fry mortality this year at the Upper Baker FSC. This is not understood. Tests of passage through the screen channel of newly emergent sockeye fry indicated no impingement, injury, delay or loss in 2010 and 2011. PSE showed juvenile collection and fry mortality data. PSE committed to improve communications about such events with the co-managers. WDFW needs to know more and wants to help. *PSE is encouraged to promptly advise Jed or Craig of any situation when they see fish not looking right health-wise so one of them can evaluate the situation while it is ongoing. There was discussion on fry releases at the boat ramp, but the fact that so few fry are found at the FSC seems to lessen the argument that the location is a problem for fry to be attracted into the FSC, which was designed to accommodate fry sized fish.* Most of this occurred during the early operation in March and April. WDFW wants other release sites up the lake, however the road was dangerous early this year for the transport truck, so release was at the boat ramp. PSE (Doug and Nick) will work with the agencies (Jed, Craig, and Kevin) to understand the cause and develop an appropriate response.

OPERATIONS UPDATES

Baker Fish Hatchery Operations, Fish Inventory

Sockeye production and a variety of operational issues were discussed. Doug explained that 133,461 Sockeye are being held in raceway 1 for fall release and bio studies in 2013. Coho are in raceways 3 and 4. Rainbow trout are all out in circulars 5-8 and are being held for spring 2012 plants into Depression Lake and various charity events

Artificial Incubation Numbers (revised numbers by Kurras):

Release to Baker Lake: 2,296,499

Release to Shannon: 2,000,010

Delayed rearing: 133,551

IHN was identified in the hatchery and was immediately contained. Some sediment ended up in the system. New valves added. All the pipes will be cleaned. Jed and Craig commended PSE for allowing the agencies to be involved in the design of the hatchery (through the relicensing process). This collaborative effort has resulted in a design that is extremely effective and the envy of many! As soon as there is suspicion that there is a problem, the water is diverted to the clarifier instead of the lake. This is good thing. Smaller container sizes make a big difference *in limiting IHN losses to small batches of fish. The small IHN outbreaks this year put the containment features of the new hatchery and the operational procedures to the test and the good news is they worked.*

They have released 1.1 million fish from Spawning Beach 4. Fry numbers are winding down to 5,000 per day now. Fry testing was negative for IHN. There was no disease outbreak at the beach. Collection structures are working well. Counters are pretty accurate. They are planning to shutdown and begin annual maintenance by Memorial Day.

There was some discussion about IHN ramifications related to adult sockeye releases into Baker Lake. Last year sampling confirmed adults were pretty heavy with IHN and found in the lake and Beach.

Incubation results:

Coho incubation: 190,000 estimated total green eggs; 184,000 estimated total eyed eggs; 182,000 total fry ponded.

Sockeye Incubation: 5.3 million green eggs; 5.1 million eyed eggs; and 4.7 million fry

Rearing at the hatchery (May 7, 2012):

Total Juvenile Coho – 222,923

Total Juvenile Sockeye – 133,461

Total Rainbow – 17,110

Adult Sockeye Forecasts, Fishery Updates

Brett presented the WDFW 2012 Skagit preseason forecasts (2/22/12) for sockeye and coho. The sockeye forecast includes 35,366 fish. Discussion included how to protect the spawning and hatchery needs given the variability likely to occur in the numbers returning.

Probability numbers were shared based on past predictions. Survival rates data shows that there is a 14% probability of occurring at a 35,000 forecast. The historical peak at the adult trap is from July 8 to July 24.

WDFW provided the 2012 sockeye broodstock schedule. The sockeye fry production goal is 6 million fry this coming brood year, with more broodstock allocated to Spawning Beach 4. Brood stock targets: 2,750 to AI and 3,400 to beaches.

Sampling rate for 2012 Baker Hatchery Coho broodstock will need to be addressed.

Juvenile Outmigration Update-Bruland

We are on pace for another record outmigration. May 6th saw a new daily high of 94,000. Doug reported there were 67,800 direct transfers at the UB FSC during a recent sub-sampling. We discussed counting methods and how to potentially improve their accuracy. PSE will propose a sub-sampling protocol as soon as possible.

Upstream Fish Trap Operations-Bruland

The Upstream Fish Trap is closed for annual maintenance. It will be back online the week of May 21.

OTHER LICENSE IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES

Progress on Plans and Reports

Arnie updated everyone on the latest reports delivered and those in the works.

Spawning Beach Decommissioning Update

The (very) new PM for this project, Lynn Thompson, phoned in and introduced herself. She will be joining us in person at the July ARG meeting to provide an update on progress.

In the meantime, Arnie explained that Anchor QEA has been brought aboard as the consultant for the conceptual design. The site visit was done 3-4 weeks ago. Anchor QEA has completed a survey and is confirming data to area maps. They are looking for re-grading possibilities. Anchor QEA should come to the July 10 ARG meeting with alternatives. Construction is planned for 2013. One challenging aspect is the scheduling of the project – construction windows will be a factor. Concepts are to be based on the USFS scope of work, returning the site to natural with some additional improvements.

Flow Implementation Plan General Update

This plan due to FERC in October of this year. Jory is working on a preliminary draft. The primary focus is on monitoring and reporting requirements for new powerhouse. This will be a major topic of discussion at the ARG meeting in June. Ramp rates and pool levels are provided as targets. Informal review will begin soon.

LWD Implementation Plan

This plan has been filed with FERC. Jacob explained they are still working out the site with the landowner. The plan is to distribute collection methods and procedures at the June meeting for review and discussion.

Gravel Implementation Plan

The draft implementation plan was distributed to ARG April 17. Comments are due by May 18, 2012.

ARG-TRIG SA 505 Update

Jacob announced that they have chosen to fund three projects. The next cycle for proposals is in August. At their June 7 meeting they will be discussing ways to improve the project selection process.

Reservoir Shoreline Erosion Control Management Plan

This plan was approved by FERC in August of 2010. The Swift Creek Campground shoreline erosion project is in design phase with construction scheduled for October 2012.

PARKING LOT

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

MEETING EVALUATION

Worked Well:

- Good discussion with COE
- Well attended
- Candid discussions about the hatchery

Do Differently for Next Meeting:

- Needed diet soda
- Looking forward to Jory's presentation

TOPICS FOR JUNE 12 ARG MEETING

- Looking for suggestions to improve the project selection process (Venard)
- Monitoring and reporting requirements for new powerhouse (Oppenheimer)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30.