



Baker River Project License Implementation

Aquatic Resources Group

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

PRESENT

Arnie Aspelund, Doug Bruland, Cary Feldmann, Jacob Venard, Nick Verretto, Scott Williams, Kim Lane, and Mark Killgore (PSE); Brett Barkdull, Brock Applegate, Jed Varney, Kevin Kurras (WDFW); Dan Berentson (Skagit County Public Works), Greta Movassaghi and Jon Vanderheyden (USFS), Tom Van Gelder (Trout Unlimited); Steve Fransen (NMFS); Bob Helton (Citizen); Stan Walsh (SRSC); Jon-Paul Shannahan (Upper Skagit Tribe); Phil Hilgert (R2); Lyn Wiltse (PDSA Consulting)

DECISIONS – none today.

2011 ARG MEETING DATES: May 10 Mtg. at Skagit Office (9-3 pm); June 14 Mtg and Fish Facilities Tour at Baker Lake Lodge. (9-3 pm); July 12 Conf. Call (9-11 am); Aug. 9 Mtg. and Video Conference at PSE Skagit Office and Snoqualmie (9-3 pm); Sept. 13 Conf. Call (9-11 am); Oct. 11 Mtg. and Video Conference at PSE Skagit Office and Snoqualmie (9-3 pm); Nov. 8 Conf. Call (9-11 am); and Dec. 13 Mtg. and Video Conference at PSE Skagit Office and Snoqualmie (9-3 pm).

BRCC: Apr. 27 at PSE Snoqualmie Office (9-3pm)

FPTWG: June 8 at the Coast Gateway Hotel in SeaTac, w/ WebEx and Conference Call capability (9-3pm)

ACTION ITEMS

- Arnie Send out all documents from today's meeting to ARG members.
- All Let Cary know if you have additional items for the BRCC April 27 meeting agenda.
- All Let Nick or Doug know if you want to go out and observe any of the testing at the UB FSC.
- All Plan to attend in person meetings: May 10 in Burlington and June 14 at Baker Lake Lodge.
- Jed Set up another meeting with co-managers and a later meeting with PSE and co-managers by the end of May. Consider having release sites field trip be the first part of the meeting (with PSE engineer(s) present and the hatchery issues discussion (at the hatchery) follow.
- Lyn Bring copy of most recent version of norms to next meeting for review.
- Nick Send Brett mortality data.

PREVIOUS - STILL RELEVANT - ACTION ITEMS

- Chuck Ask Linda Smith to give update on GI progress at upcoming ARG meeting.
- Mark Add links to source data in future flood forecast advisories (links are being added to the Baker License website). Note: Mark announced that a beta version of new PSE website is currently running in test mode. Under Hydro Licensing, Mark will add links to various weather-related websites that PSE reviews regularly. This is in response to a request made at a prior ARG meeting. Mark will provide a demo at a future ARG meeting.
- Steve Identify the Olympia contact to coordinate re. HGMP with WDFW (in process).
- Co-Mgrs Send a draft Fish Production Plan to Arnie ASAP (as per FPPF).
- All Review / update the ARG representation list for your organization (ongoing).
- Arnie Add an IPP / 106 refresher to the July, 2011 ARG meeting agenda.

ARTICLE 107(c) UPDATE

Cary reported that PSE is continuing to address imminent floods within the context of the current license. There is a range of options that can be used for the post IPP and IPP scenarios within the context of the current license. Anything outside of that scope would have to be addressed through a different means such as the Corp's GI. Dan requested another meeting with PSE and Skagit County to further discuss this.

BRCC UPDATE

Cary reported that the BRCC has not met since our last meeting. He briefly reviewed the most recent summary of license implementation working groups that were sent out by email to the BRCC. The fourth Wednesdays will continue to be reserved throughout 2011 for BRCC conference calls as needed. The next in-person meeting will be April 27, 2011 at the Snoqualmie Office. A major item on the agenda will be PSE's view / philosophy on the License and Settlement Agreement. This will be provided by the newly-named Director of Hydroelectric Resources, Paul Wetherbee. Also on the agenda are anticipated sockeye-related recreational issues, USFS draft 4(e) process, project evaluation process, website update, and updating of meeting norms. Team Leaders of the various resource working groups will provide updates. There will also be discussion of fund accounting. Additional time will be set aside to accommodate other suggested topics.

SPAWNING BEACHES 1-3 DECOMMISSIONING

Scott walked everyone through a matrix outlining the various options relative to the decommissioning of beaches 1-3. In accordance with the Historic Properties Management Plan, the next step will be to go to the CRAG with a recommended approach. Scott suggested that, at this point, it looks like PSE will recommend removing all hard features at the site and performing appropriate mitigation for the district. He will continue to provide updates on this process.

FISH PASSAGE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

Sub-sampling: Nick reported that sub-sampling on the Upper Baker FSC will begin end of April. They reprogrammed everything a couple of weeks ago. He will be on site with R2 tomorrow to perform additional testing and training on the sub-sampling protocol. There is a 60 minute cycle broken down as follows: 10% in Raceway 1 at 6 min. intervals; 40% in 2 at 12 min. intervals; 20% in 3 at 24 min intervals; 30% in 4 at 18 min intervals, repeating the cycle every hour. The interval will be reduced to 3 minutes if extrapolation error appears higher than desired (which might impel a higher subsampling rate in the future. The FSC will be at 1000 cfs through the entire study period. The sampling is slated to begin April 22 and will run until the end of June. They will review early results and adjust time intervals as necessary in order to increase accuracy and get a more even distribution. Study group releases begin May 3.

Lower Baker FSC: Nick reminded all that the new FSC is to be operational by March 1, 2013. The construction contract with Skanska Corporation was signed April 1. Nick showed us a 3D BIM Model drawing for belly tanks and the fish and flotation structures on top. The shop drawings are 25% complete. Fabrication starts in mid-May. Onsite construction is scheduled to begin this August. The pier design is at 70% and should be complete by May 3. They have already started painting lines, and putting up some signs to increase public awareness of construction activities. No recreational impacts are anticipated.

Upper Baker Guide Net Issue: Nick showed a drawing of the initiation point and extent of the tear in the guide net and explained how PSE is moving forward on the repair. After the repair, this design will be revisited and lessons learned will be applied to guide net design for the LB FSC. The two net repair panels are scheduled to be delivered on April 22, and will seal a hole from the shore to mid-NTS – about 130 ft deep by 600 ft long. They will sew the panels together and deploy them on Friday. Divers will arrive Monday night, mobilize their gear for in-water work starting the morning of April 19. Nick estimates that eight days of diving will be required to affect the repair. It should be complete by April 25 – or by May 1 at the latest.

OPERATIONS UPDATES

Fish Inventory: Doug explained they are starting to move fish off the site in preparation for installation of a screen to help keep larger debris from the hillside from entering the water supply. They have removed the rainbow trout. They will be pumping water into the head box to provide the necessary water during the installation of the screen.

The pit-tagged fish for the biological study have been moved to the net pens. The freeze-branded fish will be held until after the guide net is repaired. There are three groups of coho and one group of sockeye. One coho group was released into Lake Shannon. The other two coho groups will be released after net repair. The coho from incubation were held in swim-up raceways and then brought outside and put into 20k rearing ponds.

On April 14 there will be a hatchery operations planning meeting at the WDFW office in Mill Creek to discuss how to operate in this interim period while an operations plan is being developed. They will be discussing various protocols. Currently PSE is operating the hatchery with Kevin Kurras as the manager.

Coho incubation: They are down to the last couple of weeks and then the incubation will be complete – are all hatched out and will be ponded in next few weeks.

Coho that are moved outside: Some will be retained and others will be released into Lake Shannon.

Estimated total green eggs = 318,000; Estimated total eyed eggs = 295,000

Sockeye incubation: They are trying various ponding strategies with facilities. They are documenting the results which will be captured in a report. They had to delay everything for a week for the third year in a row. It is taking a little longer for them to ripen up.

Estimated total green eggs = 5.2 million; Estimated eyed eggs = 5.2 million; Fry, so far= 3.7 million

Kevin reported that we are running at less than 2% loss, which is quite good.

TEAMLET REPORT

On March 29 the co-managers met with PSE to discuss release site options, creel survey proposal and outstanding hatchery construction issues. At that meeting PSE proposed ways to address funding some of these within the context of the license.

PSE doesn't see the development of additional new fry release sites as part of the hatchery / fish propagation program. Cary explained that the facilities piece of the Settlement Agreement was very specific and it does not include language around the development of new fry release sites. Stan sees this as falling within the safe transport of fry that is called out in the Settlement Agreement. Cary suggests using some adaptive management money to address this. PSE would provide the funding for this ahead of schedule and the ARG can decide how to spend it. There is also money available for co-manager initiatives in year 5 of the license (2012). The ARG could agree to spend some available funds on release sites now and then back-filling with the money for co-manager initiatives when it becomes available next year. Kim explained that there is currently \$120,000 available. This could be used.

Kim also reported that he and Scott went out with the USFS to observe some of the suggested sites (Old Scott Paper Road, Blue Tarp, Channel Creek, Small Channel & Big Pond.) From an engineering standpoint, these sites are all viable. The co-managers need to have an idea of costs that would be required for the development of each site. This would help them evaluate if it makes sense to pursue any of these sites and if so, which. Greta reminded that engineering is only one element of the cost. There would likely be additional environmental review and permitting costs. There would have to be consultation with the Forest Service.

Jed will look into setting up a field trip to the potential sites with a PSE engineer for a quick evaluation of estimated costs.

Jed also reported that the large adult ponds in the hatchery were to be set up for volitional release and are not functioning as such. They need to be able to get fry out of there. The dewatering is not working. He doesn't see this as involving major construction – just some tweaks of the existing construction and the ways the screens are set up. They will discuss the problems and suggested solutions at the field trip to the hatchery.

UPDATE ON PLANS AND REPORTS

Arnie reported that PSE finalized the 2009 annual report for Settlement Agreement Article 102 "Aquatics Reporting" (overall report of aquatics articles) and submitted this and the other resource group annual reports to FERC in March. PSE also received notice that FERC approved the Baker River Gravel Management Plan (Article 108). The LWD plan is awaiting FERC approval. Several draft 2010 article reports (108 Gravel and 109 LWD) were sent out the end of March for 30-day review and more will be on the way in the approaching months, as the reporting cycle repeats.

ARTICLE 505

Jacob reported that on March 3, 2011 the ARG and TRIG met jointly to review a project proposal from Skagit County that was submitted for funding under Article 505 (Aquatic Riparian Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement Plan). The group present agreed to authorize PSE real estate to work with the county and the Lipsey property owner to validate the property's appraisal. This is estimated to cost a few thousand dollars. Jeff McGowen of Skagit County is leading the assessment. The next ARG/TRIG/505 meeting will be based on availability of new information on this proposal or as needed to address other proposals related to 505 funding.

Cary reported that he received confirmation from the PSE Legal Department that 505 funding can be used to develop a feasibility proposal for a joint funding proposal for SRF Board funding (this was brought up at the ARHWG meeting by Sue Madsen of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group).

AGENDA TOPICS FOR MAY 10, 2011 ARG MEETING

- 104 Fish Passage Connectivity – 20 min. presentation by Nathanael Overman
- Teamlet Report by Cary and Jed
- 107 (c) Presentation by Tetra Tech and Mark
- Fish Passage Update by Nick
- Review/Review Norms by Lyn

MEETING EVALUATION

Suggestions:

- WebEx works well
- Send out handouts for review before meetings if available and, if not, then send them out afterwards
- When sending out PowerPoint handouts, ensure they are legible. It may be necessary to print them 1 slide to a page instead of 2 slides on a page