

Aquatic Resource Group (ARG)

The Aquatic Resource Group (ARG) did not meet in February. The next meeting is scheduled for March 12 at the PSE Skagit Service Center and subsequent meetings planned for June 11, and September 10.

- Plans:
 - PSE continues consulting with the USFS to complete advance-level design plans for decommissioning the site of Spawning Beaches 1-3.
 - PSE has been working with the agencies and tribes to complete plans for Baker FSC(s) subsampling and UB FSC flow operations.
 - PSE has been consulting with NMFS on completing the upstream fish trap post-construction evaluation plan.
- Reports- PSE submitted the draft SA 102- overall Aquatics Report for 2011 to the ARG January 30 and requested comments by March 1. This report will be submitted to FERC in April. PSE will start submitting draft 2012 article reports for SA 108, Gravel and SA 109, Large Woody Debris by March 31.
- Lower Baker Unit 4: PSE continues planning for tests related to the installation of Lower Baker Unit 4 and a new bypass valve. The new unit is being constructed primarily to meet the new instream flow and downramping constraints specified in Aquatics Table 1 (SA 106 of the Baker License). Commissioning tests will be performed to determine that the new facilities will operate safely and reliably. PSE consulted with NMFS on approaches to using spill to mitigate downramps during full load rejection tests.
- Lower Baker FSC and downstream passage facilities: PSE continues with commissioning activities in February. Alden labs and PSE have been working to hydraulically balance the FSC screens. Testing and adjustments continue. Initiation of operation is scheduled for March 1st, per the license. An additional week of hydraulic balancing will be conducted the first week of March, while the FSC is in operation. The Upper Baker FSC will also begin operation March 1st. Planning and coordination for conduct of the LB FSC flow preference study is underway. PIT-tag releases of coho will also be conducted for first-year operations to provide an indication of collection effectiveness. The entrance flow rate for 2013 operation of the UB FSC has been agreed to bracket the peak sockeye migration window (i.e., coincides with a 94% capture rate based on the five-year period of record). The fish distribution and subsampling plan has also been agreed upon by agencies, tribes and PSE. Consultation with NMFS regarding the upstream fish trap post-construction evaluation plan is ongoing with information shared with the ARG and participation by the Stan Walsh at the last consultation meeting.
- Spawning Beach Decommissioning: Anchor QEA is handling the design work in accordance with the preferred “Alternative 5” design approach. Advance design and plan development is underway to support the permitting process, which has been initiated. PSE met with the USFS February 21 to go over the advance construction-bid drawings. PSE is incorporating comments into the next set of drawings. Road decommissioning was discussed. PSE is responsible to

decommission the road section exiting the beach site's chain link fence to the access road, but no further. PSE will provide an update at the March ARG meeting. The decommission work is on track to be completed by the end of 2013.

- PSE has requested direction from the fish co-managers regarding disposition of the hatchery-reared sockeye and coho juveniles relocated to the stress relief ponds. These fish (7,500 IHN-positive sockeye smolts and 60,000 coho smolts) remain in the stress relief ponds per instructions to PSE from the fish co-managers in January following the landslide at the hatchery water supply headworks. The stress relief ponds will be utilized for downstream fish passage operations beginning March 1. One group of coho was previously moved back to the hatchery after the water supply was restored, and PIT tagged for this spring's FSC evaluation studies.
- Other license plan implementation updates:
 - SA 108 Gravel, PSE reported that the first year of gravel monitoring was completed in December 2012. The first year of data will be included in the annual report for 2012.
 - SA 109 Large Woody Debris, the first real year of LWD collection will occur this year, so far 50 pieces have been collected. PSE will evaluate how effective the collection strategy is in May or June as the reservoirs reach full pool.
 - SA 110 Shoreline Erosion, the project design for the Swift Creek campground is complete. PSE has held a meeting with the USFS to discuss what this will look like. September or October is the likely construction window.
 - Article 505-Aquatic Riparian Habitat Protection & Enhancement: Three formal proposals for Article 505 projects (Baker Lake Fish Barrier Replacement, Hansen Creek Acquisition, Klein Property Riparian Improvement) were approved for funding at the ARG-TRIG meeting on February 12th.

Terrestrial Resources Implementation Group (TRIG)

The Baker River TRIG group did not have a regular meeting in February. The next TRIG meeting is scheduled for March 7, to be held at the PSE Skagit Service Center.

- The SA 508 Noxious Weed Habitat Management Procedures draft 30-day review period has ended. Comments on the draft are being reviewed and will be addressed in a final draft. A decision for adoption on the document (with approved edits) will be conducted during the next TRIG meeting.
- A request for interest in reviewing the SA 501 TRMP management plans (reviewed annually if needed) was sent to the TRIG. Several members indicated they would like to review the documents, so the review will be scheduled during the next TRIG meeting.
- A site visit was held at the Burpee Hill property with the DNR ID team (made up of members of the USIT, SRCS, and WDNR) to review the Long-Term FPA Step 1 application mapping of streams, crossing structures, and unstable slope features.

With a couple of minor adjustments, the Step 1 application has been validated. Development of the Step 2 application is underway and will likely be filed with the DNR in April.

- Burning of the debris piles at Alder Creek did not take place in February due to unfavorable weather conditions. It is now planned for early March.
- Work continues for replacement of the Lake Shannon loon platform with a newly designed platform and review of a new location for its installation. Design of the new platform and anchoring system is underway for that location, and installation will take place in March.

Recreation Resources Group (RRG)

The Recreation Resources Group Meeting was held on Tuesday, February 19, 2013, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., followed by a Law Enforcement Planning teamlet meeting from 12:30p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The RRG agreed to the following meeting dates for 2013:

- June 18, 2013-RRG Meeting-9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at Skagit Service Center, Baker Room-upstairs.
- June 27, 2013-RRG-Law Enforcement Cultural Resources Training, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.-Skagit Service Center Multi-purpose
- October 15, 2013-RRG Meeting-9:00-12:00/Law Enforcement Planning Meeting, 12:30-3:00 –Skagit Service Center-Multi-purpose room

Meeting placeholder will be every third Tuesday, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

The RRG reviewed the 2013 implementation schedule and the Project Evaluation protocol that was presented at the BRCC, and discussed organizational changes within each agency, including PSE, USFS, and WDFW.

Because the Adaptive Management fund allocations are decided at the resource group level, the RRG worked together to come up with a structure to guide effective and consistent prioritizing of projects within their working group. The RRG came up with a priority criteria matrix, using H for high, M for medium, and L for low for weighting. See below.

Weighting

Criteria

H	Nexus to Project: Series of connections including physical location, social, and / or resource effect.
H	Anticipated benefits vs. costs / impacts of no action or unanticipated effects; include recreational opportunity and capacity that meets demands, resource protection, public safety, education and interpretation (across all resources)
M	Relates to Article: Supports intent, ties to RRG's mission
M	Addresses things in excess of current funding limitations / what is already provided for in the specific article.

H	Aligns with / meets RRG Mission / Goals (worthiness)
L	Readiness for action / urgency (could tie to NEPA)
L	Other funding sources / options

The Law Enforcement Teamlet discussed proposed funding allocations and equipment needs for 2013. There were concerns expressed by state enforcement agencies about the new marijuana laws and the impacts it could have on enforcement in the Baker basin.

The RRG is working with Elizabeth Dubreuil, who will be providing Cultural Resources Training to the Law Enforcement Officers on June 27, 2013, at the Skagit Service Center, from 8:00-4:00. Topics will include: Introduction to Cultural Resources Management, Review of the Law, and Case studies.

Cultural Resources Advisory Group (CRAG)

The next CRAG meeting is scheduled for April 17, 2013 (10 am to 2 pm) at the PSE Skagit Service Center in Burlington. CRAG members are encouraged to be there to participate in the discussion on the Lower Baker Compound Redevelopment Project, as well as receive other project updates.

The CRAG met at the Lower Baker's Visitor's Center on January 30th to tour the Lower Baker Compound area and review the Lower Baker Compound Redevelopment Proposal. The proposal calls for new construction, demolition of historic buildings/structures, and reuse of the Baker Club House for offices and interpretive outreach. These actions will adversely impact the Washington Portland Cement Company Historic District which is located within the operation area for the hydro project. The field visit allowed members to envision the redevelopment and its impacts on the historic district.

During the field visit, members were able to review two options for redesign of the original proposal. The options were developed based on the original meeting held with the CRAG on January 16th and were meant to lessen impacts of the redevelopment on the historic district. Members present preferred Option 2 which left more standing contributing resources, demolished buildings with life/safety tags (Sackhouse and skybridge), and allowed for the necessary new construction needed by the plant. Members also toured the Baker Club House and discussed how it could be adaptively reused for both offices and interpretive outreach. All members were in favor of restoration of the Baker Club House.

Notes and handouts from the meeting were emailed to the entire CRAG for a two-week review and further comments were asked for by PSE. PSE plans to update the proposal based on input and continue consultation with the CRAG in order to develop a Memorandum of Agreement for the adverse effects to the historic district. Comments were due by February 20th and no new comments were received.