
BAKER RIVER PROJECT LICENSE IMPLEMENTATION

Aquatic Resources Group

September 11, 2007

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

16018 Mill Creek Boulevard

Mill Creek, WA

(425) 775-1311

Conference Call Procedures-Dial In Info:

1-888-228-0484 (call automatically charged to PSE)-Dial in at the designated date and time –

Conference ID: 6058

Conference Password: 12345

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Review Agenda, Notes, Actions	9:00 – 9:30
2. Updates Fish Facilities Operations Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Juvenile Fish Passage Facilities Operations (Bruland)• Sockeye Spawning Beach Operations (WDFW)• Artificial Incubation Operations (WDFW)• Fish Rearing Inventories & Releases (Bruland)• Adult Trap Protocol Update or Changes <i>Break at 10:30</i>	9:30 – 10:30
3. A-09 Draft Instream Flow Summary Report Q & A (R2-Phil)	10:30 - 11:30
4. Hatchery Design Update (PSE-Jenness)	11:30 - 12:00
<i>Lunch (provided)</i>	<i>12:00 – 12:30</i>
5. Fish Passage Technical WG Update (PSE)	12:30 - 1:00
6. BRICC and Other License Updates	1:00 - 1:30
7. Confirm Date & Agenda for Next Meeting (tent. Oct. 9), Mtg Evaluation	1:30 - 2:00

Baker River Project License Implementation

Aquatics Resource Group Meeting Final Meeting Notes

FINAL MEETING NOTES
September 11, 2007 ~ 9:00 am - 2:00 pm
WDFW Office, Mill Creek, WA

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

PRESENT

Jacob Venard, Cary Feldmann, Doug Bruland, Dave Jenness, and Paul Wetherbee (PSE); Chuck Ebel (USACE); Bob Helton (Citizen); Scott Lentz (USFS); Arn Thoreen (Skagit Fisheries); Phil Hilgert (R2); Ted Thygesen and Rich Johnson (WDFW); Stan Walsh, by phone (SRSC); Lyn Wiltse and Jamie Riche (PDSA Consulting, Inc.)

NEXT ARG MEETING(S): October 9 (if sufficient topics warrant meeting) – otherwise, November 13.

NEW ACTION ITEMS

- All - Review the Work Group Representative list, let Arnie know about updates.
- All - Let Arnie know if you want to attend the Sept. 25 agency walk-through of FSC.
- All - Reserve ARG meetings for 2008 as per the long-term schedule distributed by Arnie.
- Cary - Work with Arn to give the Skagit County Herald a copy of the Hydro article.
- Rich - Talk with Bret B. re: scientific studies in the basin – what makes sense going forward?
- Doug B- Investigate classification of amphibians at Little Park Creek.
- Cary - Follow up with Bob H. / NASA re: counter problems.
- Doug B- Follow up on access road to Beach 3 / Channel Creek.
- Rich - Let Doug know co-managers' decision re: adult trap protocol.

OLD (STILL PERTINENT) ACTION ITEMS

- Doug - Work with Cary and Arnie to determine why our Lower Baker recovery numbers and percentages were so good.
- Cary & Dave – Contact Ernie Brannon re: providing independent review of hatchery design.
- Cary - Send Bob Helton a copy of the FSC DVD.
- Cary - Check on the status of “The Baker Story” ... share Hydro Review article when published.
- Jacob - Send out an “all call” for interested parties re: gravel plan.

FISH FACILITIES OPERATIONAL TOPICS

Juvenile Fish Passage Facilities Operations

Doug B. (PSE) walked the group through the draft juvenile fish passage numbers and the various studies in process. He distributed an updated sheet to rectify a discrepancy with the morts. There were few sockeye zeros this year. They were returned to the lake. The smolt season is over (ended July 31, as usual); the trap was decommissioned in preparation for the new facility. There was average to slightly above average returns for the marked brand group. Last year was a record for out-migration. This year our sockeye out-migration was more normal.

Our program to get the sockeye better prepared to face the winter before release went well. FSC biological evaluation study: 3,000 fish were pit-tagged and released throughout the season for recovery. Results from gill tissue samples will be analyzed and summarized by R2. This should help us answer the age-old question: “What is a smolt?” We’ll review this at a future ARG meeting (November or December after the results are in).

Rich J. will investigate about any WDFW fry releases and the relative survival of coho smolt at Lower and Upper Baker.

Little Park Creek

Total is about 3,700, which is about the lowest we’ve had compared to other years. There is a question about how valuable it is and if it should be continued, who should participate in supporting this trap? The co-managers agreed to get together to discuss the relevance of continuing to operate the trap at Little Park. They also agreed that it’s time to look at the ‘big picture’ of biological study activities in the basin.

Sockeye Spawning Beach Operations

We reviewed the Baker Spawning Beach Update Kevin prepared for us. Arnie noted that 2,700 adult sockeye returned this year, therefore the pond loading was also low (51 – 53%). Doug shared that the new Smith-Root counter heads will be in place for the out-migration next year. There is continued concern about the accuracy of the numbers we’re getting from the counters. We may want to go back to pie type sub-samplers (the old spawning beach use to utilize 5% sub-samples) or other sample techniques.

Bob shared information about a NASA program to support engineering problems at no cost! Cary will follow up to see if they can help us with our counter problem.

Artificial Incubation

The 689 adults we have are half of what we need. This means probably no sockeye fry plants into Lake Shannon this year. The co-managers will, before February, make a determination re: the 70%/30% fry allocation split between Baker Lake and Lake Shannon.

Fish Rearing Inventories and Releases

Doug explained this program is similar to what we’ve had in the past. 64,000 sockeye will be ad-clipped beginning this week. 8,000 will be held for study and we’ll release the rest this fall after lake temps drop. 60k Coho will also be ad-clipped and retained for spring release. Sockeye brood stock is 690 (Note: 180 on the handout is a typo). Doug also reported that we are getting ready for sockeye spawning for our incubation program.

We have received about 20,000 rainbow trout from Arlington hatchery for spring release into Depression Lake, like before. We just started getting brood stock for coho and will be collecting up to 200 (no-clipped and coded-wire tagged). Construction of the new hatchery is planned for summer 2008 and we will retain as many rearing units as possible through construction.

Access Road

Scott shared an idea about the access road to Beach 3 / Channel Creek. Doug B. will connect with the crew guys and Jed/Kevin, then button up with Scott if needed.

Adult Trap Protocol

With Stan on the phone, Rich reported that Bret called him last night to say he wants to make a change to the protocol, specifically re: the fall no-mark, no-tag Chinook. His suggestion was change the Oct. 1 start date for taking Chinook broodstock to Marblemount Hatchery to Sept. 25 based on prior year data. Stan shared that his groups are in agreement with that change; Stan will check with Jean-Paul and email instructions to Doug.

BRICC / LICENSING UPDATE

The NMFS Bi-Op should be out after one more round of regional review. Cary heard that there were no real substantive changes that came out of the initial regional review. There was discussion about some other high-priority activities that may be delaying NMFS. This remains the final outstanding piece of information FERC needs to issue the license.

The last Baker River Interim Coordinating Committee (BRICC) was an August 22 conference call, and the group heard an update on the legal proceedings re: permitting and the 401 Water Quality Certification. Background: The Town of Concrete issued a construction permit and the Department of Ecology issued the 401 and CZMA consistency plan. Diking Districts 1 (*not 2, as indicated in previous notes*) and 12, along with the cities of Burlington and Mt. Vernon have appealed Concrete's permitting process as well as the 401. The court date is set for November 7-9. PSE met with the appealing parties to hear their concerns re: flood control. The appellants want us to put all the control at Upper Baker, essentially eliminating Article 107b with the understanding that all parties agree to abide by the USACE's GI process which is under way.

PSE has won the first round of appeals on this. FERC has authority to issue the license regardless of the outcome of this process. If the appealing parties win, then it's possible the 401 could be withdrawn and reissued. We don't know how this might impact the license. It was noted that litigation is always a risk ... PSE is in the midst of their own internal discussions on this matter and wants input from the ARG and other participants in the relicensing process. Arn suggested staying the course and not changing the settlement agreement. Stan feels that agreeing to settle with the appellants (i.e. removing Article 107b) puts tribal resources at risk. Rich noted his folks' belief that there is a large amount of flood control in the agreement and echoed Stan's comments about making any changes that would erode protections for fish. Scott suggested PSE contact Jon Vanderheyden for USFS input. It was suggested we help put a human face on our position by having Settlement Agreement signatories sign a summary sheet demonstrating support of PSE in the lawsuit.

Interim Protection Plan

The IPP is designed to protect habitat and Chinook spawning in the Skagit River below the Baker Project. Cary shared that in preparation for the spawning season (9/15–10/15 and 10/15–11/15) the IPP indicates reducing maximum generation to 3200, beginning 9/1. The Lower Baker unit operates best at 2,800 cfs maximum, so PSE is planning to generate at this level. In the meantime, need to draw down the reservoir to create storage capacity. From 10/15 – 11/15, PSE will generate 4 hours/day (generate for 2 hours and then ramp for 2 hours) to create additional attraction flow to the Lower Baker adult trap. The IPP operates to discourage fish from spawning high and having their eggs dry out. This protocol is disrupted in flood or drought conditions; if these conditions occur, PSE will convene a conference call for input. Given if the dry weather conditions continue, Arnie could be setting up a call this week or next.

HATCHERY DESIGN UPDATE

Dave J. (Project Manager, PSE) gave us an update of progress on the hatchery project. The deadline for proposals was extended to September 14. PSE will then select the design/build team from the three teams submitting proposals: MWH, McDougal (FSC builders), and ESC/Dahlgren. KCM/Tetra Tech withdrew from consideration due to issues and staffing difficulties from their side.

FSC UPDATE

Arnie showed another, new video compilation (time-lapse style) of still photos taken of the FSC construction activity from February through August 2007 (including when it was launched). Lyn resisted the pun temptation of announcing how appropriate it was to view the launch while eating lunch... He then showed photos of the project in its current state and walked the group through an update of the progress thus far.

FISH PASSAGE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The next FPTWG meeting is scheduled for Sept. 25 with a FSC field trip. The Oct. 2 and Oct. 10 FPTWG meetings have been cancelled; an alternate meeting date of Oct. 11 at the Lodge has been proposed. The BRICC will also be viewing the FSC at its new location in the forebay on October 24th.

The FSC is set to be towed into the forebay on Oct. 1, weather/wind permitting. The Net Transition Structure is being assembled on shore and will be launched end of September and moved to the forebay Oct. 8th. PSE will then store it for the winter and attach it to the system in the spring. The guide nets will be assembled by the end of September and deployed by spring. We assume the guide nets will be critical to the performance capability of the FSC. The mooring hook-ups to the FSC will be made first week of October. The stairway tower and landing are complete. Start-up testing for the FSC is presently scheduled to begin December 28 of this year. This can occur only after hydraulic screen balancing is complete.

Arnie reported that PSE will be presenting preliminary SOPs to FERC in the near future before FSC start-up. They will be finalizing them after the first operating season. This would include incorporating agency feedback before submitting them to FERC.

The adult trap is scheduled to be at 90% design by the end of November and final by the end of the year. Construction is to start August 2008.

A09 DRAFT INSTREAM FLOW REPORT

Phil reviewed briefly the edits he will be making to the report, based on feedback he has received to date. Edits include acronym/abbreviation table and influence of global warming. Phil will discuss climate change influence by looking at how it might impact buffers (how long we could maintain mid-flow releases). In this instance, our Adaptive Management and Unforeseen Circumstances protocols would kick in. Phil will also be adding a section for agency review at the back of the report. He plans to populate this with excerpts from our meeting records.

Rich confessed that he read the entire report and found it to be informative, logically organized, and an excellent description of the science behind the settlement agreement.

Barring receipt of any additional comments in the next few days, Phil will make the above edits to the report and call the report final. At that point, it will be posted as such on the Baker Relicense website.

HANDOUTS

- Agenda for Sept. 9 Meeting and Final Notes from July 10 Meeting
- ARG Norms
- Work Group Representative List
- 2007 Upper Baker Available Fish Trap Data
- 2007 Lower Baker Juvenile Fish Trap Data
- 2007 Upper Baker Smolt Data
- Little Park Out-Migrants 2007
- Baker Spawning Beaches 9/11/2007
- Baker Project Fish Inventory (Sept. 6, 2007)
- Baker Adult Trap Protocol (Jan. 9, 2007 revision)
- Weighing in: Helpful Hatcheries, *BC Outdoors Sport Fishing Magazine*, March 2006

MEETING EVALUATION

What Went Well

- Time lapse video of FSC construction process
- Great food!
- Stan's participation via phone

What to Do Differently

- Deviled-Egg filling was too gooey
- Need greater agency participation
- Missed Gary. (We will always miss Gary...)

AGENDA FOR NEXT ARG MEETING

Date/Location to be confirmed.

1. Welcome, Review Notes, Action Items, Agenda
2. Fish Facilities Operational Topics
3. Update on License / Implementation Activities
 - a. Litigation Update
 - b. Fish Hatchery Update
 - c. Fish Passage Update
 - d. Other?
4. Evaluate Meeting, Set Next Meeting Agenda & Location

2007 MEETING DATES: Oct 9 (tentative), Nov 13, Dec 11

PROPOSED 2008 MTG DATES: Jan 8, Feb 12, Mar 13 (*2nd Thursday instead of 2nd Tuesday*), Apr 8, May 13, June 10, July 8, Aug 12, Sept 9, Oct 14, Nov 11, Dec 9