



Baker River Project License Implementation **Aquatic Resources Group**

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

PRESENT

Arnie Aspelund, Cary Feldmann, Jacob Venard, Lynda Kupfer, and Tony Fuchs (PSE), Nick Verretto by phone and Scott Williams by phone (PSE); Bob Helton (Citizen); Stan Walsh (SRSC); Dan Berentson (Skagit County); Greta Movassaghi (USFS); Brett Barkdull, Kevin Kurras by phone, and Brock Applegate (WDFW); Ashley Rawhouser (NPS); Jamie Riche (facilitator, PDSA).

DECISIONS – none today

ARG DATES: (No Dec. meeting) Jan. 10 phone/web meeting, then alternating in-person and phone/web meetings: Feb. 14, Mar. 13, Apr. 10, May 8, June 12, July 10, Aug. 14, Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11

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

- Co-Mgrs Email PSE regarding the change to the Coho broodstock collection protocol
- Arnie Send the Co-Mgrs an email every other week titled: “Annual Fish Production Plan?” with the following message: “How’s it going?” (per Stan’s request)
- Co-Mgrs Give PSE direction re: protocol for collecting, sampling, and transporting fish from the trap

PREVIOUS - STILL RELEVANT - ACTION ITEMS

- 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 FFPF)
- All Review / update the ARG representation list for your organization (ongoing)

BRCC UPDATE

The fourth Wednesdays will continue to be reserved throughout 2011 for BRCC conference calls as needed. In-person meetings are scheduled semi-annually (spring and fall). Cary briefly reviewed the notes from the Oct. 12 BRCC meeting; there has been no new action since that meeting.

DECOMMISSIONING OF SPAWNING BEACHES

Scott reported that an RFP for contractors to prepare the conceptual plan for the decommissioning of Spawning Beaches 1-3 has been sent out. Responses are due Nov. 18. A contractor will be selected by early December and should be ready to present conceptual plans to the ARG in the first few months of 2012.

Cary reminded the group that PSE is vacating the site and must leave it in a condition that is acceptable to the landowner (USFS). Their interest is to leave the site in a condition that does not require maintenance. Once a contractor is selected, there will be additional discussions about the nature of the finished look. There are

also cultural, rare plant, *bald eagle and marbled murrelet*, asbestos, and possibly contamination issues to be addressed.

INTERIM PROTECTION PLAN UPDATE

Arnie reminded folks that Irena Netik, PSE Operations Manager, came to the last ARG meeting to update the group on recent IPP operations. The “avoid generation” period of the IPP was Sept. 15 – Oct. 15; PSE is now in a period of recapturing storage and is on track to meet the 115K AF by Nov. 15 (in fact, they are nearing that now).

Cary commented that this season was managed well. There were a couple high-flow events and some increased discharge related to those events (all within the IPP); generally, though, it was a relatively easy season.

HATCHERY OPERATIONS

Kevin reported that spawning operations are going well. They have spawned three times so far and will spawn again tomorrow. All four beach sections are hot with high titer levels of virus. This is most likely IHN, although it will take a week to confirm with tests. Disease protocol is in place and everyone is following it well. Kevin is not anticipating any problems. The fish are holding nicely; formalin treatments will be discontinued next week. Because they have been treated with formalin, the spawned fish and any residual brood stock will be disposed in a landfill.

Bob asked if anyone knew whether IHN and the new virus (Salmon anemia, reported in the media) were present in wild fish. An attendee mentioned that Craig Olsen sampled fish in the Baker and in Channel Creek. There was some incidence of IHN in the wild (although not as concentrated as in the hatchery). The tests were negative, though, for the new virus. Kevin added that they aren’t expecting this new virus to show up in Washington waters, but they are on watch for it.

Doug commented that, the new beaches and the mini pontoon boats, makes access and the work safer and so much easier. Kevin added that the ergonomics are great.

For the fry being produced at the hatchery (BY2011), the distribution plan is to put 2 million into Shannon, 4 million into Baker.

HATCHERY FISH INVENTORY

Doug reported that Raceway 1 and Raceway 2 are holding Sockeye juveniles. This Thursday, all but 11,000 will be released into Baker Lake. Of the remaining 11,000, 10,000 sockeye will be freeze-branded in January; 5,000 will be released into Shannon and 5,000 into Baker in April (the extra 1,000 is a buffer for any losses).

He commented that the new fish pump at the hatchery worked really well to move the ad-clipped fall-release sockeye between the raceways.

Raceway 3 has 60,000 Coho. Most of these will be held until Spring, released into the stress release ponds at concrete in April where they will continue on into the Skagit. From the Raceway 3 collection, there will be 3 freeze-brands groups (5,000 each at Lower Baker, Upper Baker and Shannon, as usual).

Rainbow are in the circulars and Doug reports that the circulars are working really well. As the fish get larger, there are extra circulars to move them into so that densities don’t get too high. Some of the Rainbows will go to Tribes and derbies; the rest will be released into Depression Lake before the end of April (before the opening day of fishing).

We have about 80 Coho broodstock (running about half of what was expected, but this trend is consistent with apparent Coho survival rates / returns seen throughout the Puget Sound). Those will be supplemented

with wild Coho. Co-Managers will send PSE an email with updated instructions for the Coho broodstock collection protocol.

Chum: Not expected to be a large run this year, and Stan emphasized the importance of the protocol to ensure that all Chum get back to the Skagit River.

Cary asked the Co-Managers for direction regarding a protocol for collection, sampling, and transportation of fish in the trap. They agreed to work on that.

ANNUAL FISH PRODUCTION PLAN

Stan says, “We’re workin’ on it!” He asked Arnie to put the co-mgrs on the email version of auto-dialer, with a note every other week asking them how it’s going.

PLANS & REPORTS

Arnie walked briefly through the timeline of upcoming plans and reports.

FSC CONSTRUCTION REPORT

Nick Verretto reported that good progress is being made at the construction site. ARG members at the Oct. 12th FPTWG meeting visited the construction site. Pontoons have been delivered and are being installed. He and Arnie showed photos of the progress.

Nick reviewed the schedule, which remains unchanged since the last ARG, BRCC, and FPTWG meeting. The FSC will launch early next June. Stan suggested a site visit to walk around the completed facility before it launches. Nick concurred and indicated that he’d like to have two site visits before launch.

The next FPTWG meeting hasn’t been scheduled, yet. Nick will send out a meeting notice by email.

NEXT MEETING

Due to a light anticipated agenda, the ARG agreed to cancel its December meeting. The next ARG meeting will be January 10 and is scheduled to be a conference call.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m. and reconvened as the Article 505 Aquatic Riparian Habitat Working Group.