

North Fork Lewis River Project Request for ACC Consensus

Modification of existing rainbow trout planting in Swift Reservoir

Part A: Decision Summary

A majority of the voting members consented to approve the trout stocking plan to modify the allotment of rainbow trout planted into Swift Reservoir and the Swift No. 2 power canal (see Appendix A). A number of concerns were raised include the limited access and angler opportunity provided in the power canal. However, the ACC recognized that the primary justification for this action is to limit to limit the number of rainbow trout collected (at the FSC) and transported downstream. The decision to approve the plan represents a compromise between impacts to ESA listed species (from rainbow transported downstream of Merwin Dam and angler opportunity. Some members discussed the potential need for creel surveys on the canal to evaluate angler participation and catch rates.

Date of Decision: October 8, 2020

Part B: Decision Request – Request for ACC Consensus

1. Representatives and Affiliations

- a) List all Representatives and Affiliations requesting Committee decision
Lewis River Aquatics Technical Subgroup (ATS)

2. Description and Justification of Request

- a) Requested Action: What specifically is requested of the ACC?

Request to approve modifications to the existing rainbow trout planting allotment between Swift Reservoir and the Swift No. 2 power canal. Specifically, approval to modify the existing fish planting allotment as follows:

- Reduce the Swift Reservoir plant from 18,000 pounds to 14,400 pounds of rainbow trout.
- Increase the Swift No. 2 power canal plant from 2,000 pounds to 5,600 pounds, and extend the planting from April – May to April – July.

A detailed description and justification of the recommended plan is attached (Appendix A).

- b) Introduction and background

See Appendix A

3. FERC or Settlement Agreement Requirement(s)

- a) What relevant FERC or SA articles justify this action?

This requested action pertains to Section 8.6.1 of the Lewis River Settlement Agreement which stipulates that Licensees shall provide the production of 20,000 pounds of resident rainbow trout to be stocked in Swift Reservoir annually per terms of the new License.

EXCERPT from - Lewis River Settlement Agreement (November 2004) – in Section 8: Hatchery and Supplementation Program – pg. 67 – 68

8.6 Resident Fish Production

8.6.1 Rainbow Trout Production. Each year, for the terms of the New License, subject to Section 8.6.3, The Licensees shall provide the production of 20,000 pounds of resident rainbow trout. When the New License is Issued for either the Merwin Project or the Swift Project, whichever is earlier, The Licensees shall fulfill their obligation by providing for the production of 800,000 juveniles with an estimated weight of 40 juvenile fish per pound, or an equivalent number, in pounds, of resident rainbow trout of a different life stage as directed by WDFW, following Consultation with the ACC. The Licensees shall provide for the stocking of such rainbow trout in Swift Reservoir. Resident rainbow trout will be managed separately from steelhead and shall not significantly interfere with recovery of self-sustaining, naturally producing, harvestable population of native steelhead.

8.6.3 Modifications in Resident Rainbow Trout and Kokanee Production. The Licensees shall modify resident trout and kokanee production numbers as part of the Hatchery and Supplementation Plan, in Consultation with the ACC and subject to the approval of the Services and WDFW, to address other management goals, including, without limitation, harvest considerations and impact of resident fish hatchery program on the reintroduction program; provided that the Licensees shall not increase (i) resident rainbow trout production above a cap of 20,000 pounds and, (ii) resident kokanee production above a cap of 12,500 pounds.

- b) Are there any other regulatory requirements to support the requested action?

See 3(a)

Part C – Committee Decision (to be completed by Committee)

1. Committee Decision

- a) Was the decision made by consensus (as defined in the Committee ground rules)? The ACC followed the consensus process, and consensus to approve the plan was achieved.
- b) Document voting record and tally (if applicable) Of the 9 voting Representatives present at the meeting, the vote tally was:

Vote	Number
NO ¹	1
YES	8
Abstain	0

¹ Although Trout Unlimited voted to not approve the plan, Trout Unlimited will not stand in the way of consensus.

Voting Record, ACC meeting, October 8, 2020.

Signatory organization	Voting Representative	Present	Consent to approve trout stocking modification?
American Rivers	Bridget Moran	X	Yes
City of Woodland	Director, Public Works		
Clark County	Not Available		
Cowlitz County	Not Available		
Cowlitz Indian Tribe	Eli Asher		
Cowlitz-Skamania Fire District No. 7	Not Available		
Fish First	Jim Malinowski		
Lewis River Citizens at-large	Not Available		
Lewis River Community Council	Mariah Stoll-Smith Reese		
Lower Columbia River Fish Recovery Board	Steve Manlow	X	Yes
National Marine Fisheries Service	Josh Ashline	X	Yes
National Park Service	Not Available		
Native Fish Society	Bill Bakke		
North County Emergency Medical	Not Available		
PacifiCorp and Cowlitz County PUD No.1	Todd Olson	X	Yes
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Not Available		
Skamania County	Not Available		
Trout Unlimited	Jim Byrne	X	No ¹
US Bureau of Land Management	Not Available		
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Tim Romanski	X	Yes
USDA Forest Service	Kate Day	X	Yes
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	Bryce Glaser	X	Yes
WA State Recreation and Conservation Office	Katie Pruit		
Woodland Chamber of Commerce	Not Available		
Yakama Nation	Bill Sharp	X	Yes

*** Note: In accordance with the ACC/TCC Ground Rules protocols, the Request for Consensus template was distributed to absentee ACC representatives to allow absentee members the opportunity to vote. No votes were received from absentee members.**

¹ Trout Unlimited voted no, but will not oppose the majority vote.

2. Justification for Committee Decision

- a) What information (i.e. empirical data) and how was this information used to inform decision?
- Access restrictions at the power canal
 - Creel survey of the power canal to evaluate catch success

3. Contingencies or Conditions of the Decision

- a) Is decision contingent on other actions or information? An additional 7-day review was provided to all ACC Representatives providing the opportunity for absentee Representative to vote on **xx**.
- b) Is implementation of decision contingent on specific actions or information? No
- c) Are there any conditions attached to this decision? No

4. Additional Information or Notation None

North Fork Lewis River Project

Request for Decision

APPENDIX A

BACKGROUND and RECOMMENDATION:

The Utilities are required to stock 20,000 pounds of resident rainbow trout into Swift Reservoir annually in the spring for recreational fishing per the Lewis River Settlement Agreement (Section 8.6). After several years of operation, it has been found that a portion of these fish are subsequently collected at the Swift Reservoir Floating Surface Collector (FSC), and are then: 1) returned back to the reservoir; or 2) transported downstream below Merwin Dam along with out-migrating juvenile salmon/steelhead. The number of fish within each group can vary annually (Table 1), and is largely related to the number of out-migrants entering the FSC during peak migration, and the duration and rate of sub-sampling that is required at the facility.

The concern over possible direct and/or indirect effects of these fish on juvenile salmon and steelhead in both Swift Reservoir and downstream of Merwin Dam was discussed at the June 27, 2019 Aquatic Technical Subgroup (ATS) Meeting. The goal of this initial discussion was to review the current stocking program of resident rainbow into Swift Reservoir, and discuss possible stocking alternatives associated with fish size, timing, and/or location. The ATS's approach was to look for both alternatives that could be implemented relatively quickly, as well as identify more programmatic alternatives that may need to be considered and further developed in the future if needed.

Currently, the ATS is still reviewing more programmatic alternatives and anticipates that this topic will be further discussed during the next review of the Lewis River Monitoring and Evaluation Program, which is scheduled to begin 2021. However, given concerns over possible direct and indirect effects of this stocking program on juvenile salmon and steelhead, the ATS felt it was necessary to determine whether any short-term changes could be made that would limit the exposure of these fish both in Swift Reservoir and below Merwin Dam from fish being transported downstream from the FSC until a more permanent solution could be developed.

As part of this initial effort, several considerations were discussed. The first, was to modify the fish separation system at the FSC to better sort resident rainbow trout from out-migrating salmon and steelhead. However, because of the large size range of the out-migrating salmon and steelhead smolts (approx. 80mm-320mm) being collected at the FSC, modifications to the existing juvenile fish separation and handling system were not feasible. There were also limitations of what could be done to the existing sorting system that would not exacerbate debris accumulation and increase the risk of fish injury and survival. The possibility of stocking larger resident trout that pass into the adult fish tank rather than the smolt sorting system was also discussed, but it was thought that larger fish could present a higher predatory risk to smaller out-migrants passing through or rearing in the reservoir. Rearing separate groups of resident trout that could be stocked into Swift Reservoir across several stocking events rather than all fish being released at one time was also considered. However, given the various programs that the Lewis River Hatchery Complex currently supports combined with the facility infrastructure, placing

large numbers of resident trout on different rearing schedules is not a viable short-term option. There was also the concern of warmer water temperatures that develop in Swift Reservoir later in the year would limit fish stocking efforts.

Given these considerations, the ATS concluded that the best short-term solution would be to maintain the current stocking program goal of 20,000 pounds of resident rainbow trout being produced, but stocking more of these fish to the Swift No. 2 Power Canal beginning in 2021. At the April 9, 2020 Lewis River Aquatic Coordination Committee (ACC) meeting, members agreed to stocking a small number of resident rainbow trout allocated to the Swift Reservoir recreational fishery into the Swift No. 2 Power Canal. The ATS recommends that this practice be continued and that additional fish originally designated to being stocked into Swift Reservoir be reallocated to the Swift No. 2 Power Canal. The ATS recommends that this practice be implemented for the 2021 stocking year, and that it be continued until a more permanent solution can be determined. A detailed description of the recommended stocking plan is provided below.

Table 1. Annual stocking and collection numbers of catchable rainbow trout in Swift Reservoir since 2013.

Stocking Date	Number Stocked	Fish Size (Fpp) Stocked	Total Pounds Stocked	Estimated Number Collected (Swift FSC)	Estimated Passed Downstream	Adipose Clipped
04/24/2013	55,261	2.18	25,349	819	453	NO
06/03/2014	52,080	2.50	20,832	648	0	YES
05/27/2015	51,800	2.53	20,474	1,876	290	YES
06/01/2016	45,350	2.51	18,068	5,194	1,713	YES
05/31/2017	51,440	2.56	20,094	2,900	444	YES
05/29/2018	41,920	2.52	16,635	2,087	146	YES
05/21/2019	38,800	2.63	14,753	4,405	2,992	YES
05/19/2020	42,600	2.86	14,895	2072 (by 7/17/20)	1041 (by 7/17/20)	YES

Rainbow trout stocking into Swift Reservoir

Proposed Stocking Plan beginning 2021

CURRENT STOCKING PROGRAM:

Currently, catchable size rainbow trout (~2.5 f/lb) are produced and the majority (18,000 lbs) are stocked into Swift Reservoir over a 1 to 2 day period in late-May and just before fishing season begins Memorial Day weekend (Table 2). The remaining catchable size trout (2,000 lbs) are stocked into the Swift Power Canal on two separate periods coinciding with the statewide lowland lake fishing season opener (late-April) and just before Memorial Day weekend (late-May). Approximately 1,000 lbs of trout are stocked during each event.

Table 2. Current rainbow trout stocking program

Number/Size of Fish	Pounds	Plant Location	Plant Month
45,000 @ 2.5 F/LB	18,000	Swift Reservoir	May
5,000 @ 2.5 F/LB	2,000	Power Canal	April, May

Plant Location	Plant Month	Number	Pounds (lbs)	Size	Rearing Hatchery
				(fpp)	
Swift Reservoir	May	45,000	18,000	2.5	Speelyai
Swift No. 2 Power Canal	April	2,500	1,000	2.5	Merwin
	May	2,500	1,000	2.5	Speelyai
Total		50,000	20,000		

RECOMMENDED STOCKING PROGRAM:

The recommended stocking plan beginning 2021 would reduce the total pounds of catchable rainbow trout being planted into Swift Reservoir by approximately 3,400 lbs (or approximately 8,500 fish). This would be accomplished by increasing the pounds of trout being stocked annually into the Swift No. 2 Power Canal (Table 3). Under the proposed plan, 14,400 lbs (or approximately 36,000 fish) of catchable rainbow trout would be stocked into Swift Reservoir in late-May and just before the reservoir opens to recreational fishing. The remaining 5,600 lbs (or approximately 14,000 fish) of trout would then be stocked into the Power Canal to meet the total program goal of 20,000 lbs. The number of stocking events into the Power Canal would increase from 2 to 4, and would now take place on four separate occasions during the months of April, May, June, and July.

Table 3. Proposed stocking program beginning 2021

Number/Size of Fish	Pounds	Location	Plant Month
*36,000/vary	14,400	Swift Reservoir	May
*10,500/vary	5,600	Power Canal	April, May, June, July

Planting Location	Planting Month	Number*	Pounds (lbs)	Size	Rearing Hatchery
				(fpp)	
Swift Reservoir	May	36,000	14,400	2.5	Speelyai
Swift No. 2 Power Canal	April	3,500	1,400	2.5	Merwin
	May	3,500	1,400	2.5	Speelyai
	June	2,100	1,400	1.5	Merwin
	July	1,400	1,400	1.0	Merwin
Total		46,500	20,000		

* Note: Overall the total number of rainbow trout planted will be reduced by 3,500 fish based on size at planting to meet the 20,000 pounds mitigation goal.

Request No. 2020 - 02

Request Date: August 31, 2020

Notes:

- Water temperature in the power canal are conducive for stocking rainbow trout through July based on historical data.
- The use of triploid eggs for the 2021 planting group will not be possible, however the use of these eggs may be possible in future years and will be dependent on WDFW approval. These fish possess three sets of chromosomes which render them sterile and do not reproduce in the wild.
- The trout stocked into the Swift No. 2 Power Canal in June and July will be larger than those stocked in April and May due to their rearing schedule. As a result, a fewer overall number of fish will be stocked as part of the program to meet the 20,000 lb goal.