Meeting Minutes

Lewis River Aquatic Technical Subgroup

To: Lewis River Aquatic Technical Subgroup Date: July 25, 2024

From: Larissa Rohrbach, ATS Coordinator, Anchor QEA, LLC

Re: Final Minutes of the April 27, 2023, Lewis River Aquatic Technical Subgroup Meeting

The Lewis River Aquatic Technical Subgroup (ATS) meeting was held virtually on April 27, 2023, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Attendees are listed in Section IV of these meeting minutes.

Action Item Summary

- See Work Plan.

Agreements or Recommendations

- None.

Review Items

- None.

Finalized Documents

- None.

I. Review Agenda, Review Last Meeting Action Items, and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

A. Review Agenda

- Larissa Rohrbach reviewed the agenda, and no changes were requested.

B. Review ATS Work Plan Priorities

- Rohrbach reviewed the most recent version of the ATS Work Plan which was distributed with today's agenda. The status of the work plan items was updated.

II. ATS Meeting Topics

A. Draft Coho Salmon Transition Plan - Comments and Responses

Hatchery Genetic Management Plans

Bryce Glaser provided a progress update on the Hatchery Genetic Management Plan (HGMP). Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will submit HGMPs to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries by July 31 for consultation due to litigation risk related to meeting timelines. This will require WDFW to work aggressively with PacifiCorp on transition plans and on draft HGMP reviews.

Erik Lesko asked whether all HGMPs will be prepared for submittal or only those for the highest-priority programs. Glaser said there is a preference to submit them all as a bundle with a formal request for consultation on all species at the same time. However, there are varying levels of priority within the group. Coho Salmon and steelhead are the most complicated, which will be discussed today. There would potentially be six HGMPs in the bundle: two for Coho Salmon (early and integrated), two for steelhead (winter and summer), one for spring Chinook Salmon, and one for (Lewis) Chum Salmon (not a Hatchery and Supplementation Plan species). So, there would be five for PacifiCorp review. Each will follow a similar format and include similar information with programs and plans fully described therein.

Coho Salmon Transition Plan Comments and Responses

Glaser reviewed comments and responses to the Coho Salmon Transition Plan, documented in a matrix distributed to the ATS on April 25. Two areas of concern were as follows:

- Consideration of using fish from the segregated Coho Salmon program as needed based on in-season, ad-hoc decisions
- A need to incorporate the results of life-cycle modeling as they become available to inform management targets, triggers for switching between phases of recovery, and when to allow harvest. WDFW has tried to clarify that uncertainty in the document by describing the longer-term strategy as conceptual, which could be tailored when the next direction for the program is decided.

Lesko said that if the plan is only dealing with late Coho Salmon, an ad-hoc decision to use the segregated program fish will have to be made before the early Coho Salmon season is complete. Glaser replied that there would no longer be a late Coho Salmon program—it would be replaced with an integrated program that will run across the breadth of the whole return. A portion of that run will return earlier if integration with the native run is appropriately implemented. Glaser agreed that

Lesko is correct; however, because it would be difficult to react midseason to changes in collection approaches during the integrated run, some early-season forecasting would have to be used to consider whether to reserve early adults. This Coho Salmon Transition Plan is intended to create a more integrated, genetically appropriate stock for the program without using the segregated early program anymore. It would really have to be a dire situation to necessitate using the segregated program fish to meet that need.

Kale Bentley said that all populations are still in the recolonization phase; Coho Salmon is one that lacks a formal analysis for establishing triggers for moving to the next phase. There are no formal pHOS or proportionate natural influence (PNI) targets, but those will in theory have limits once certain phases are deemed successful. Passing segregated program fish to the upper basin would have some drastic effects on PNI, which would be especially problematic in the future when we will be trying to manage for different targets, not just abundance. Glaser said that they are close to selecting the best performing fish for repopulating the basin and identifying those triggers for each phase. If downstream juvenile collection efficiencies start to improve, Coho Salmon are likely to respond rather quickly.

Chris Karchesky asked whether an additional review of this version would be necessary. Is the next step for this to be moved to the Aquatic Coordination Committee (ACC) soon? Glaser responded that it would be beneficial to continue having discussions if there are lingering concerns. Glaser would be interested to push it to the ACC to continue those conversations, especially to include the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board. HGMPs are being drafted to reflect this and will be tweaked based on final comments. The hope is to move this one to the ACC level and to receive comments and feedback. Karchesky said, in the context of providing this to the ACC, that there may be more discussion needed to meet long-term goals and the use of hatchery fish for transport upstream, especially for the natural, sustainable reintroduction unit. Karchesky agreed that it makes sense to get this to the ACC to start answering some of those questions; however, it must be clarified that the transition plan is not presently ready for approval. Glaser asked what constitutes full recovery. What is the role of hatchery fish in the reintroduced population? That information may not be available yet because the life-cycle models and management triggers are not fully developed. Language identifying that uncertainty has been included in the draft. The draft is intended to help with future conversations. It is important to not be hung up on concerns that are far off into the future, such as implementing harvest in ways that would slow down approval/implementation of the transition plans. When setting up the framework for transition plans, the long- and short-term versions are considered. It has been decided to tone down the language around the long-term vision. Karchesky agreed it would be appropriate to move this forward and get that review by the ACC.

Glaser said the timeline for getting decision documents on these is now somewhat compressed; the Coho Salmon document should be moved to the ACC now, followed by the steelhead document soon after. NOAA's capacity to engage with these transition plans may be limited, although these documents are going to the Services for consultation.

Rohrbach asked how these areas of uncertainty can be translated into the HGMPs. Glaser responded the Hatchery and Supplementation (H&S) Plan and Aquatic Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (AMEP) line out the approach to develop additional modeling work which have been reviewed and approved by NOAA. It would not be good to end up with two different strategies, monitoring requirements, or term and conditions that are in conflict with the work that this group has already done and agreed to. WDFW and PacifiCorp's' deadlines are July 31. It has been suggested a transition plan for spring Chinook Salmon is not needed because there have not been significant changes observed. The final step will be to move this on to the ACC for review and discussion in their May meeting.

B. Draft Steelhead Transition Plan – Introduction

Kale Bentley shared a presentation titled "Lewis Winter Steelhead Hatchery Programs: Alternative Hatchery Strategies Evaluation". The presentation elaborated on what Josua Holowatz presented in the last meeting: the transition plan for steelhead will follow the same format as for Coho Salmon. Elaborating on the internal discussion, this presentation describes where WDFW wants to go with the steelhead program. This was presented to the fish program staff last fall; with several follow up conversations with regional staff to update the various scenarios.

See slides inserted below for more information.

Lesko asked for clarification on how the strategy would separate the 75,000 stepping-stone winter steelhead, noting that some of the fish are likely to spawn in the lower river. Bentley agreed and said that was an assumption in the model. Hatchery-origin fish are actively being introduced to the upper basin with the intent that they will spawn in the wild.

Glaser said there are two objectives: conservation and harvest. The transition plan is trying to figure out how to transition away from the Chambers Program (the current harvest program) to something that is more compatible with the goals that to be achieved in the basin and the sideboards already been given by NOAA Fisheries. WDFW understood that there was an interest from the ATS in better understanding the rationale for making the transition plan recommendations. WDFW feels the recommended strategy (No. 3) provides better harvest opportunity and opportunity to maintain the existing conservation program. Ultimately, a single transition program may be implemented, but first there is a need to make improvements and understand where the reintroduction and collection

efficiency efforts stand. Similar to Coho Salmon, this will be a phased approach to adjust in the future as new information is collected.

Karchesky asked whether the transition plan will have a narrative of the analysis presented by Bentley. Glaser replied that it will have a summary but will not present all the scenarios and tradeoffs presented today.

For next steps, see the following slides:

- Steelhead Transition Plan
  - Finish and distribute draft to Lewis ATS (by May 5th).
  - ATS Review by May 18th.
  - Incorporate feedback & distribute to Lewis ATS – review at May 25th meeting.
  - Send to ACC for review – June 8th ACC.
  - Present DD on Coho and Steelhead Transition Plans at June 8th meeting.
  - Seek Approval and finalization of DD at July 13th ACC meeting.

- Summer Steelhead
  - No planned changes except potential production change (associated with winter steelhead transition plan.
  - No additional Transition Plan needed.

Next Steps

- Spring Chinook
  - No immediate plan to change from Segregated program.
  - H&S plan calls for transition plan to integrated program.
  - Life Cycle modeling will inform timing for transition.
  - Two options for transition will be described in HGMP for implementation at a later date.
    - 1) a single integrated program for the entire production, or
    - 2) a "stepping stone" approach utilizing a smaller highly integrated program alongside a segregated program to meet production goals
  - Proposal: No Transition Plan is needed.
- HGMPs
  - WDFW update and review with PacifiCorp to reflect transition plans.
    - On-going while transition plans are reviewed/approved.
  - Submit to NOAA by July 31st

Lesko agreed that there is no need for a spring Chinook Salmon transition plan for now. The presentation will be distributed to the ATS. The steelhead transition plan will be distributed next week with a request for review by the ATS by May 18.

C. ACC Decision Process

Lesko said the ATS and the Fish Passage Subgroup (FPS) were formed as recommending bodies to the ACC. A decision template has been prepared, which is used for formal recommendations that relate to interpretation of the Lewis River Hydroelectric Projects Settlement Agreement (Settlement Agreement) or amendment of the Settlement Agreement.

There is another class of recommendations, such as those for the Yale Reservoir behavioral study. Lesko asked how to recommendations for issues that are worked on in consultation with the ACC. One option would be to use the existing decision document. A less formal option would allow the ACC to review plans for 30 days, present the plan to the ACC with the recommended changes, allow them 30 days to review, then vote in June. The vote would be documented in the meeting notes, highlighted red and bold.

Bentley asked how this differs from what is currently being done. Lesko responded that this process has not really been done in the past for studies or plans that were already included in the Settlement Agreement, but now the ATS or FPS have products that need approval by the ACC. Glaser agreed that the decision template has helped with interpretation and context needed for large issues that involve reinterpretation of the Settlement Agreement. There is a need to seek ACC agreement on other issues and to hold a formal vote that gets captured in the notes. This this suggestion will be made to the ACC to find out if that is adequate. The ACC could inform whether a given recommendation is big enough to require a decision document. The term "consultation with the ACC" is not well-defined. In some cases, the Services have the final say, and in some cases they are looking for the consensus from the ACC to inform their decision. In may be necessary to check in with the Services to find out what level of formality they need to support the consultations. Lesko said that in some instances, it may be worth the work to fill out the decision template to provide that formal documentation.

Bentley asked whether it is clear what topics would require ACC approval or notification. Lesko said a mechanism is lacking for getting information to the ACC regarding small in-season changes, like changes in broodstock. Glaser said the decision document will be provided May 8 for the ACC and provided 1 month in advance of the next meeting. The FPS charter says that all decision points should be formatted as a decision document.

D. Update: Annual Operations Report Roll-out to ACC

Erik Lesko provided a summary of how PacifiCorp plans to review the Annual Operations Report (AOR) for the ACC in their May 11 meeting. Lesko, Karchesky and Jeremiah Doyle will each give presentations on the H&S Plan activities, AMEP activities, and Bull Trout monitoring activities, respectively (Bull Trout monitoring is part of the AMEP). This will be the first time PacifiCorp has given an overview presentation of the AOR to the ACC.

E. Update: Genetic Monitoring Strategy Update

Cramer Fish Sciences (Cramer) has done a pilot evaluation on a subset of 300 existing Lewis Basin steelhead samples to better establish the genetic baseline for the population upstream of Swift Reservoir. Cramer observed some genetic structure; there will be a meeting with Cramer on May 4, then a time will be set up discuss with WDFW an approach for additional sampling this summer. This is all part of the genetic strategy in draft form now. After WDFW, Cramer, and PacifiCorp meet later in May, that strategy can be finalized for steelhead.

Coho and spring Chinook Salmon samples were also sent to Cramer. The next step will be to review sampling needs for Coho and spring Chinook Salmon, especially in the Lower Lewis River, to characterize that baseline.

Bentley asked to see an update of the implementation plan and supplemental sample list; the sample list provided included only samples from fish that were collected in the hatchery or lower basin or were transported. Bentley was surprised to hear there was some structure; the meeting could be more productive if that information were available on hand. It will also be helpful to discuss the logistics of where, when, and who will collect additional samples this summer. Sampling logistics for upper and lower basin steelhead as well as spring Chinook Salmon are planned for the fall. Lesko said Meridian Environmental collected several samples in the Clear Creek and Muddy Water Creek systems.

Lesko agreed these would be the main topics for the next meeting. Lesko will provide that information, including the memorandum from Cramer, to Bentley and Todd Seamons at the end of next week or early the following week. A meeting with WDFW will be held in the third or fourth week of May.

F. Update: Fish Health/Pathology

Sean Roon said there have been no fish health issues in the past month. Spring Chinook Salmon in-hatchery survival data has been sent to Rohrbach to support the spring Chinook Salmon evaluation. The Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab has been unresponsive. Roon is

considering sending the remainder of samples to a separate histology lab. Water filtering eDNA work is being conducted above Swift Dam to detect any rSal or bacterial kidney disease. Samples will be collected in the next month.

G. Update: Hatchery Practices, Other In-Season Changes

Speelyai Hatchery wrapped up marking and tagging the October group and one of the February groups. It is now pending hauling to Lewis next Wednesday or Thursday.

Spring Chinook Salmon return and collection has been slow but is picking up slightly. It is still behind the collection curve.

The Merwin summer steelhead and winter steelhead smolts volitional release has been completed. Summer steelhead broodstock is currently being collected without issues. Ten females have been spawned with 15 to go. Rainbow Trout out-planting for opening day was completed last Saturday. Five thousand fish were placed at the power canal. There is another planned release for the Swift Reservoir and the power canal when they open on Memorial Day weekend.

Mike Chamberlain said that Coho Salmon marking will start the day after Memorial Day. The fish appear healthy and in good condition. The weather has permitted work on the grounds and the ponding of Coho Salmon into the large ponds. Water and air temperatures have been cold, and it seems to be delaying adult spring Chinook Salmon recruitment. There has also been a large showing of pinnipeds in what seems like record numbers. There have been unusual smelt runs that continue to trickle in and out. Signs of pinniped damage have been observed on adult fish. 40% of adults have seal marks. That is typical for Coho Salmon, but this year, seal marks have also been observed on spring Chinook Salmon.

Holowatz said that pinniped presence is a problem in all Lower Columbia River tributaries, up to the barrier dam at river mile 40 on the Cowlitz River and the canyon on the Kalama River further up the tributary. The WDFW pinniped program is documenting and doing surveys of haul outs and the number of animals in the tributaries. This issue has gone to the higher levels of the agency and is being looked at very seriously. The more pinniped predation, injuries, and general impacts we can document the better. There is a pinniped observation form for that too. The Columbia River pinniped biologist, John Edwards (WDFW) has been in contact with Karchesky.

H. Other Updates

Holowatz said spring Chinook Salmon retention on the Lower Lewis River will be closing on the April 24. Fishing has been good—local guides have asked to keep it open; however, WDFW will close it to protect broodstock collection. The Columbia River management unit that does that monitoring

will prepare a brief document summarizing the results. Lesko said that late winter steelhead peak spawning was based on redd counts.

I. Review Next Meeting Topics

The ATS identified the following potential items to discuss at the next meeting:

- Revised Coho Salmon Transition Plan – as needed, discussion on to support ACC decision
- Draft Steelhead Transition Plan – comments and responses
- Genetics Plan Update

III. ATS Administration

The next meeting will be held virtually on May 25, 2023.

IV. List of Attendees

Name	Affiliation
Larissa Rohrbach	Anchor QEA (Meeting Support)
Chris Karchesky	PacifiCorp
Jeremiah Doyle	PacifiCorp
Erik Lesko	PacifiCorp
Amanda Farrar	Cowlitz PUD
Christina Donehower	Cowlitz Tribe
Dalton Fry	Cowlitz Tribe
Kale Bentley	WDFW
Mike Chamberlain	WDFW
Sam Gibbons	WDFW
Bryce Glaser	WDFW
Josua Holowatz	WDFW
Anja Huff	WDFW
Erin Peterson	WDFW
Aaron Roberts	WDFW
Kevin Young	WDFW
Tyanna Blaschak	USFS
Keely Murdoch	Yakama Nation