Chelan River Fishery Forum (CRFF) Meeting Minutes

Date: May 21, 2015
Time: 8:00 am – 12:00 noon
Location: Chelan PUD Headquarters, Wenatchee, WA
Engineering Services Conference Room

Call in number: *1-509-661-4844*, Access Code is *4000*

Meeting called by: Jeff Osborn, Chelan PUD Note taker: Debby Bitterman

Attending CRFF Members

Name	Agency	Phone	Email
Travis Maitland	WDFW	509-665-3337	Travis.Maitland@dfw.wa.gov
Jim Pacheco	Ecology	360-407-7458	jpac461@ecy.wa.gov
Phil Archibald	LCSA	509-784-2471	kim.l.lohse@gmail.com
Jeff Osborn	Chelan PUD	509-661-4176	jeff.osborn@chelanpud.org
Steve Hays	Chelan PUD	509-661-4181	steve.hays@chelanpud.org

Meeting Purpose: Meeting of the Chelan River Fishery Forum to continue Lake Chelan license Implementation

Minutes

Jeff Osborn, Chelan PUD, welcomed everyone to the Chelan River Fishery Forum (CRFF) meeting and made know that voice recording of the meeting was initiated for note-taking purposes only.

The agenda was reviewed and approved.

Chelan River 2015 Flows

Jeff reported that the final April 1-July 31 runoff volume forecast for the Lake Chelan Basin is 64% of average. As stated in the Settlement Agreement, a runoff volume between 20%-79% exceedance (80% - 117%) is considered average. Jeff stated that this is the first below average ("dry") year that has occurred since implementation of the Chelan River Project (2009). Therefore, the May 15 through July 15 flow level requirement for the Chelan River is 80 cfs.

Habitat Channel/Other Streams PHABSIM modeling/steelhead spawning

Jim Pacheco, Washington Department of Ecology, conducted PHABSIM model analysis of the Chelan River Habitat Channel at various flows levels, based on the number of pumps used to provide spawning flows, and four comparable local streams (Chiwawa River, Nason Creek, Mad River, and Entiat River) where instream flow data were available for comparison of the amount of suitable spawning habitat for steelhead. Model results for water velocity and combined substrate and water velocity were presented at the meeting (see handout.).

Jim is convinced that the channel is not built the way it was supposed to be. He believes that the channel is too narrow, with water depths too great and water velocities too high. He feels that the channel needs to be widened in a couple of locations now rather than the future in order to increase the amount of suitable steelhead spawning habitat.

Jeff emphasized that the goal of the Settlement Agreement was to create 3-4 acres of useable spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and Chinook salmon: approximately 2 acres of spawning and rearing habitat in the Habitat Channel with emphasis on steelhead; and 1 to 2 acres of additional spawning habitat for Chinook salmon in the tailrace. The focus was on habitat and not so much on the flow in the Habitat Channel. Jeff stated also that he thought it was inappropriate for Ecology to suggest that the Habitat Channel is not built correctly when Ecology was represented fully at all channel design meetings, approved 30%, 60%, 90%, and 100% design drawings, and that PUD engineering staff are confident that the channel was built to design drawing specifications.

Jeff stated that he feels the habitat is too new to make a change, is working effectively for spawning and rearing water temperature is likely a strong influence in Habitat Channel fish species presence, and the CRFF should also be considering this as a factor. The first required significant milestone for the Chelan River is the 2019 10-year

check-in required in the Lake Chelan 401 water quality certification. At that time Chelan PUD, Ecology, and EPA will review the progress toward achieving Biological Objectives for the Chelan River.

Phil Archibald, LCSA, noted that more than just spawning habitat suitability needed to be considered in Habitat Channel function, such as juvenile carrying capacity, water temperature, instream structures, and food resources. He stated the importance of overhead cover, and suggested adding additional log structures to the habitat channel as an alternative for increasing steelhead spawning habitat vs. reshaping of the channel at this time. Phil thought that natural retention of steelhead fry may improve as the natural development of the channel continues. He does not support mechanical modification of the channel after only six years of development. Phil supports waiting until the ten-year check in.

Travis Maitland, WDFW, agreed that all variables need to be considered. He too stated that it is too soon to modify the channel. More time is needed to evaluate the potential for achieving Biological Objectives.

The conclusion, after lengthy Forum discussion, was that the majority of the CRFF do not agree that widening the Habitat Channel now is an appropriate next step. It was noted that if Ecology felt strongly about pursuing widening the Habitat Channel now, then two options are available: 1) gain support from other CRFF members/representatives for recommending action to Chelan PUD; or 2) any Party may request that a dispute be considered by the Lake Chelan Policy Committee for resolution. (Section 16 Settlement Agreement)

Chelan River 2015 Flows

Attending CRFF representatives noted that 2015 is a below average run off volume year in the Lake Chelan Basin, the first one since license issuance in 2006. During the meeting, attendees expressed concern regarding warm water temperatures that were expected to occur in the Chelan River and Habitat Channel. **The CRFF recommended that Chelan PUD initiate one pump operation when the daily maximum Chelan River water temperature exceeds 70°F and let it run until such time as snorkel surveys, conducted monthly, determine that steelhead fry/parr are no longer present in the Habitat Channel, likely through August or September.**

Snorkel Survey Update

Steve Hays, Chelan PUD, noted that Chelan PUD plans to conduct monthly snorkel surveys (not required by License) to take advantage of no spill planned for lake level control for 2015. Zero spill is an opportunity to investigate the presence, or lack thereof, of steelhead fry in the Habitat Channel without the variable of high flows due to spill. Historic lack of steelhead fry documented in the Habitat Channel could be due to high Chelan River water temperatures, steelhead fry being flushed out due to high spill levels, or a combination of both. Investigating steelhead fry presence without spill in 2015 will provide valuable data attempting to answer these questions.

Jim asked whether Chelan PUD was addressing the presence of smallmouth bass in the Habitat Channel. At this time, Chelan PUD has no plans to attempt to control the population of bass in the Habitat Channel. It was noted that it would be nearly impossible to eliminate smallmouth bass from the Habitat Channel, as they have breeding grounds in the Columbia River below the channel and above the channel in the lake.

Steve reported that the Chinook fry count was larger in the pool above Noah's Ark than in either the tailrace or Habitat Channel.

Most recent snorkel survey summary:

- 500 suckers in the pool
- 500 suckers (approximately) in the habitat channel
- 500 suckers (approximately) in the tailrace
- 55 smallmouth bass in the Habitat Channel greater than 6 inches which some appeared to be nesting
- 34 smallmouth bass in the pool above Noah's Ark
- 3 smallmouth bass in the tailrace

Chelan River Temperature Modeling Update

Steve Hays reported that he has not seen the temperature model as of yet. The data are still being gathered and being compiled into a spreadsheet. The model calibration report should be ready for CRFF review and comments by the end of May or the first part of June.

Riparian Feasibility Investigation Update

Jeff is compiling PUD comments that he has received into the draft document. He will then resubmit to Herrera Environmental Consultants for incorporation. Jeff said that once Herrera has incorporated PUD comments into the draft report and sent back to the PUD, then he will distribute to the CRFF for their review and comment prior to the next meeting. Jeff noted that the report included technical and conception elements.

Meeting Action Items:

- Jeff Osborn will provide design drawings and supporting documentation regarding the design and construction of the Chelan River Habitat Channel to Jim Pacheco.
- Jeff Osborn will schedule for an updated aerial base maps (photos) of the Chelan River Habitat Channel.
- Steve Hays will provide snorkel dates to the CRFF.
- 29 May 2015: Jeff will send the draft Riparian Feasibility Investigation Report with internal comments to Herrera.
- 5 June 2015: Jeff will send Herrera's edit final draft Riparian Feasibility Investigation Report to the CRFF for their review in preparation of the next meeting.
- Jeff will send out an email regarding next meeting date options (June 23 or 25) and agenda items to discuss the Riparian Feasibility Investigation Report with Herrera Environment Consultants and temperature model development with West Consultants and Ecology.