

Rocky Reach Meeting Minutes

To: Distribution List
From: Scott Kreiter/Steve Lachowicz
Date: November 9, 2000
Subject: Rocky Reach Natural Resource Issues
Attendees: Refer to Sign-Up Sheet
Location: Chelan PUD Second Floor Conference Room, Wenatchee, WA
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Meeting Purpose

- 1) Review and discuss study reports
- 2) Review/develop study plan outlines for 2001

Review of Study Reports

Water Quality Monitoring Report

Final report is due at the end of November.

Gregg Carrington, Chelan PUD (PUD), mentioned a response letter dated October 27, 2000, was received from Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) regarding Chelan PUD's questions for meeting state water quality standards and obtaining the 401 certification. The letter made two main points: 1) The EPA is gearing up to complete a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL); and, 2) DOE's long-term goal with Total Dissolved Gas (TDG) is to protect the beneficial uses of the river. The letter also states that they do not have specific answers to the questions, but will work toward those as part of the TMDL process.

Study plan outlines for both TDG and water temperature monitoring were sent out for review on October 15, 2000. Since no comments have been received, the next step is to distribute the final version for comment, then develop the detailed study plans.

Fish Presence & Habitat Use

No new information to report. The report is due at the end of November.

Aquatic Habitat Mapping

The report is due at the end of November.

Literature Investigations (see study reports and summary handout)

Effects of Pool Fluctuations

The main purpose of the report was to investigate the potential effects of Rocky Reach pool fluctuations on fisheries resources. Brian Cates, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services (USFWS), commented that the fishery resources section appears to focus mainly on salmon and recommended adding resident fish to the discussion.

Steve Hays (PUD) explained that changes in the water level could be caused from drafting water at the dam or fluctuating inflow to the reservoir. Mainly the effect is noticed from Beebe Bridge up toward Wells Dam. The group discussed that the change in elevation could have some stranding effects. Steve (PUD) pointed out that nearly 200 redds were recently observed in the Chelan River. Tony Eldred, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW), added that they are still covered by approximately one foot of water and do not appear close to being de-watered. It was noted that the report states that there have not been any observations of any fish strandings in the Rocky Reach pool since 1991. Phil Archibald, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), commented that Columbia River Fisheries Resource Office (FRO) 2000 data from the mouth of the Entiat within in the fluctuation zone should be forwarded to the consultant and included in the report. Steve (PUD) stated he would also get actual counts from Chelan PUD's Fish & Wildlife department.

In regard to riparian habitat, Rod Woodin (WDFW) commented that the discussion is based on speculation of the current habitat and should include actual data. Scott Kreiter (PUD) acknowledged and stated he would coordinate with the habitat mapping work and include that data in the next draft.

Sediment Dynamics

The report focused on the historic photos ranging from 1910 to 1998. The report concluded that, one, because Rocky Reach is a run-of-river Project and, two, based on the existing information, sediment passes through the Project quickly. The study also showed that the depositional area of the Entiat River has changed.

Fish Community Structure and the Effects of Resident Predators

It was pointed out that northern pikeminnow are the dominant predators of juvenile salmon and are very abundant in the Rocky Reach reservoir. As a control measure, Chelan PUD initiated a pikeminnow population reduction program at both Rocky Reach and Rock Island dams, which has proven to be very successful in removing large numbers of pikeminnow.

Rod (WDFW) commented that predation of sculpins on smaller anadromous salmonids is common, yet the report mentioned that there was a fair abundance of predation observed on chinook fry. He felt that the report should put more emphasis on sculpin predation.

Scott also mentioned that the report states that there is no information regarding the losses associated with bird predation in the Project area, but Chelan PUD has implemented bird harassment measures to help reduce the effects of bird predation.

Status of Pacific Lamprey in the Mid-Columbia

This report was very detailed and provided discussion on the distribution, abundance, life history and possible causes of decline.

Large Woody Debris (LWD)

This was a short report discussing the source, function and fate of LWD in the Rocky Reach reservoir. The main source of LWD appears to be the Entiat River. Chelan PUD removes LWD that floats into the forebay.

Rod (WDFW) commented that LWD is a system-wide issue and there should be an opportunity for system-wide coordination and should be included in a cumulative effect analysis.

Creel Survey

Roving surveys were conducted on a total of 134 anglers. The report concluded that the angling effort is low in the reservoir. However, the surveys were concluded prior to salmon season. Phil (USFS) suggested that he report should include some supplemental information regarding salmon season, because anything is better than completely excluding it.

RTE Plant Survey

This report was a very detailed survey. Every plant species observed was documented in the report. The report stated that prior to the 1999-2000 survey, the only rare plants known in the project area were nine occurrences of giant helleborine. During the survey, 14 populations of six rare plants were found within the project area.

RTE Wildlife and Cover-type Mapping

He informed the group that the vegetation maps were not included in the report, but are available on the web site. The intensive survey sites will also be on the web when they are received.

Comments on all study reports are due December 11, 2000.

Bull Trout Study Plan (revised)

The revised plan included specific fish capture methods, release site alternatives and bull trout trap design. Douglas PUD was present to discuss the plan and answer questions regarding its participation in the study. Bob Clubb (Douglas PUD) stated that the Wells Coordinating Committee would be discussing their involvement at the next meeting. He continued saying that trapping may not be done at Wells Dam because peak bull trout passage time is also the peak for spring chinook, but they would still participate in a tagging effort.

The plan is to capture 20 fish at Rocky Reach and ten at Rock Island. They will then be anesthetized, tagged and allowed to recover for 30 minutes prior to returning them to the river. The group discussed the three release site options. The options are either to be released back into the ladder, into the tailrace, or upstream or downstream from the dam. Gregg (PUD) suggested that releases could even be split, ten upstream and ten downstream.

Tony Eldred (WDFW) indicated that Art Viola (WDFW) had a concern that if there were mainstem spawning occurring, then that population would probably stay fixed in the reservoir. There would not be a way to determine how many there were or how many were tracked. Phil (USFS) responded that he did not think there was a spawning population, but that they do spend much of their adult life rearing.

Mule Deer Mortality Update

No new information to report. Vegetation sampling and fecal collection is ongoing. The December capture effort will be completed in March.

White Sturgeon Update

Study will be conducted in 2001 if the necessary permits are obtained.

Other Business

HCP Status Update

Steve Lachowicz (PUD) informed the group that the draft EIS would be ready for distribution within two weeks followed by a 90-day comment period. The next HCP meeting has not been set, but will likely occur after the release of the draft EIS.

TDG Subcommittee

Steve (PUD) mentioned that both the Analysis of Total Dissolved Gas and Total Dissolved Gas Supersaturation in the Natural River Environment reports are on the web site. The Analysis of Total Dissolved Gas provides data from 1997-2000 monitoring stations. Conclusions of the report indicate that the level of dissolved gas arriving at the Rocky Reach forebay was not having much impact at the level in the tailrace and there may be some slight decreases in dissolved gas from the Rocky Reach to the Rock Island forebay.

Total Dissolved Gas Supersaturation in the Natural River Environment report provides discussion on determining the potential biological effects of TDG supersaturation and how to protect the fish. Steve explained that supersaturation can result from gas bubble disease, which is caused by the formation of bubbles in the fish. The report provides detailed information regarding gas bubble disease (GBD). He concluded by saying that it is not clear whether fish can detect TDG supersaturation. However, there is some evidence that show some fish may be able to detect and avoid supersaturation.

Next Meeting

To be determined.

Action Items

- Begin creating water temperature monitoring study plan.
- Add resident fish to discussion in Pool Fluctuations report.
- Scott will determine status of Section 10 permits.
- Add time of year to pictures in Sediment Dynamics report.
- Coordinate Pool Fluctuation report with Fish Predation.
- Coordinate Bull Trout Study Plan closely with working group.
- Add late chinook season data in Creel Survey.
- Forward FRO data to consultant.
- Coordinate habitat-mapping data and include in riparian habitat section of pool fluctuation report.
- Steve Hays will get redd counts at Beebe from Andrew Murdock.

Reference materials are posted on the web site, www.chelanpud.org/relicence. Please contact Rosana Sokolowski, (888) 663-8121, Extension 6371, if hard copies are required.

- Sign-up sheet
- Distribution list
- TDG study plan outline
- Water temperature monitoring study plan outline
- DOE response letter to PUD regarding water quality standards dated October 27, 2000
- Summary of studies handout
- Water Quality Monitoring Report – 3rd Quarter 2000, First-Draft
- Effects of Pool Fluctuations Report, First-Draft
- Sediment Dynamics Report, First-Draft
- Fish Community Structure and the Effects of Resident Predators Report, First-Draft
- Status of Pacific Lamprey Study Report, First-Draft
- Large Woody Debris Study Report, First-Draft
- Creel Survey, First-Draft
- RTE Plant Report, First-Draft
- RTE Wildlife Report, First-Draft
- Bull Trout Study Plan (revised)
- Analysis of Total Dissolved Gas, September 2000
- Total Dissolved Gas Supersaturation, March 2000