
Rocky Reach Meeting Minutes

To: Distribution List
From: Scott Kreiter/Steve Lachowicz
Date: February 21, 2001
Subject: Rocky Reach Natural Resource Issues
Attendees: Refer to Sign-Up Sheet
Location: Rocky Reach 4th Floor Conference Room
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Meeting Purpose

- 1) Review and discuss 2000 study reports
- 2) Review 2001 detailed study plans
- 3) Tour Rocky Reach bull trout trapping facility

Review of Final Study Report Comments

Scott Kreiter, Chelan PUD (PUD), stated he has not received additional comments on the final 2000 study reports and asked the group for comments. Joe Kastenholz, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), commented that there had been an apparent miscommunication regarding the mule deer study. Joe explained that the USFS had understood that the mule deer study would include not only the Rocky Reach mitigation lands, but also the Lake Chelan area, including the north shore. Because the study plan originally began under the Lake Chelan relicensing and because some of the study updates from Paul Fielder (PUD) included references to the Lake Chelan area, the USFS believed that the north shore would be included. Joe informed the group that Chelan PUD was proposing to use Rocky Reach mitigation money to purchase radio collars so that WDFW could tag some deer on the north shore of Lake Chelan. Steve Hays (PUD) explained that the use of the wildlife mitigation fund for Rocky Reach is determined annually by cooperators from the USFWS, WDFW, USFS, NPS and Chelan PUD. Gregg Carrington (PUD) said that his understanding was that the cooperators had agreed to let the USFS use the \$17,000 in previous years for prescribed burns, but this year the group decided to use the money for purchase of radio collars. The collars would not be used for the relicensing portion of the mule deer study, but would be used for the larger cooperative study managed by the WDFW. After further discussion, Gregg suggested they meet with Paul Fielder in order to get more details on the issue.

Fish Presence and Habitat Use Survey

The report was 99 percent complete. Once the habitat preference curves were completed and inserted into the report, a first draft would be distributed. Scott (PUD) pointed out that the site-specific sampling map would also be included in the first draft. Appendix B (habitat maps) will be available in color and on the Web site and included in the distribution of the first draft. Gregg (PUD) recommended that color maps be sent to working group members.

Scott explained that he and Jeff Osborn (PUD) met with Duke Engineering & Services and discussed each of the utilization curves (located in Appendix C) and selected the different habitat types that would be used for the utilization preference curves.

Scott pointed out that salmon surveys were also conducted. Those results showed that 42 redd were located along the west bank of the Columbia River below Wells Dam. Water depth, velocity and substrate were all measured at that area as well. Video and aerial surveys were also conducted and no other spawning activity was observed in the Project area.

Aquatic Habitat Survey

Mapping was complete and analysis was being conducted. The report would be due next week.

Gregg Carrington (PUD) pointed out that there was much information in the reports, and he wanted to know what the working group thought was the best way to make the information useful for future operations and identifying ongoing project-related impacts. He continued by saying that oftentimes it has been commented that the information was not presented in a useful manner, but it was actually up to the working group to decide the best way to articulate the information efficiently. Gregg explained that the consultant was hired to present the facts and they were not asked to interpret the results. Steve Hays (PUD) commented that the first step was to define the objectives and then generate a list of questions that would answer and support the goal. The working group agreed that the PUD would generate the initial list of questions and the working group would review and provide suggestions that would present the study information in a useful manner. Gregg noted three generic things that the working group needed to decide: 1) what questions needed to be answered, 2) how to present the information, and 3) how to use the information.

Water Quality Monitoring Report

Scott (PUD) reported that the overall water quality was good. In the summer months, data indicated that the water temperature in the Rocky Reach tailrace did not exceed temperature in the Wells Dam tailrace temperatures by more than 0.3°C, except on a few days. It could not be determined if the slight increase was a result of Project operations.

Continuous thermographs were used from July 19 to Sept. 11. They were placed at 1P, 2P, 4P and 5P (5P was not recovered). Gregg asked if 5P was checked prior to Sept. 12. Scott mentioned that it should have been checked in August.

Gregg (PUD) commented that the working group should review the study thoroughly, then decide on the issues that need additional information and generate a series of questions as discussed for the fish presence and habitat use survey.

Temperature Monitoring Study Plan

Steve (PUD) pointed out to the group that the water quality monitoring report contained much temperature data and showed that current water quality standards for temperature were exceeded during the summer months and, therefore, will be an issue. He explained that WDOE was working with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to initiate a total maximum daily load (TMDL) process for temperatures on the Columbia Basin. The water quality standard stated that water temperature cannot exceed 18°C due to human activities or cannot raise the temperature more than 0.3°C above natural conditions. Based on those standards, the questions were: 1) did the Columbia River water temperature increase from the Wells tailrace to the Rocky Reach tailrace; and 2) what portion of any increase was attributable to the effect of the Rocky Reach Project. The objective of the 2001 study plan was to collect temperature data that would be adequate to support model assessments of the Rocky Reach Project's effect on thermal loading to the Columbia River.

Steve (PUD) informed the group that the request for proposals would be sent out today. Once the proposals were received, the working group would be need to: 1) determine what type of model would be appropriate; 2) who was capable of developing the model; and 3) what additional field work needed to be collected during the warm season that would support the model. Gregg (PUD) explained that once the consultant was selected, they would develop the detailed work plan and present it to the working group. Steve informed the group of his initial list of consultants who would receive proposals, but if anyone had additional recommendations he would be willing to send more out.

Steve mentioned that the EPA was in the initial steps of the TMDL and was currently doing some outreach and public involvement. He informed the group that EPA held a workshop, and his understanding was that a proposal would be out by the end of 2002. Gregg (PUD) mentioned that PUD met with EPA and WDOE on Feb. 14. He

pointed out that if the accuracy of the model and the accuracy of the measurement devices were less than the standard, there would already be a problem and those questions would be asked of WDOE.

Steve concluded that it was not known what the long-term approach would be to water quality of the Columbia River. For relicensing, however, it will need to be determined what impact (if any) the project is having.

Dissolved Gas Biological Effects Monitoring Study Plan

This study plan was also mailed on Feb. 2, 2001. The only comments received so far were from Chris Maynard (WDOE) via telephone.

Steve (PUD) explained that biological effects of elevated total dissolved gas (TDG) levels on salmonids and other fish have been under way for many years. The amount of literature regarding those biological effects on salmonids was extensive, but the information available for other aquatic life was more limited. He mentioned that there was also a tremendous amount of information available on total dissolved gas effects on migrating salmon. However, what was not known was the effect on fish that live in the area year-round.

The study goal was to determine the effect of elevated TDG levels on aquatic invertebrates and non-salmonid fish and determine the effect of gas bubble trauma as a result of spillway operations. If elevated TDG levels cannot be modified from an operational approach, the information gathered in the study would be necessary to make an evaluation as to whether or not aquatic beneficial uses were supported even if the project had an elevated level of TDG.

Steve provided an update on the Waterways Experiment Station (WES) study. The study will be conducted in 2001 and will evaluate operational methods of reducing the amount of dissolved gas for different spill configurations. Gregg (PUD) added that they will be taking cross-sections at various points to measure what flow regime created what types of conditions, and the goal would be to predict the best way of releasing water. The study plan would be due April 1. This study was being conducted for the annual gas abatement schedule with WDOE and was not a relicensing study.

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Update

The PUD will be holding an HCP workshop on Feb. 22 for the purpose of providing background to answer any questions for relicensing participants. Bob Dach, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), will also be conducting a public meeting during the week of March 6. The DEIS was issued on Dec. 29 and comments will be due March 29.

TMDL Update

Steve Lachowicz (PUD) reported that at the meeting with EPA on Feb. 14 they summarized what a TMDL is. There were three pending actions that will have a major impact on the entire Columbia River. The first was the new water surface guidelines proposed by WDOE. Steve explained that the comment period ended on Feb. 16, and the PUD submitted substantial comments. The WDOE goal was to have the new guidelines in place by the end of 2001. The second piece was to complete the TMDL by 2002. Third, was the effort under way by representatives from Washington, Oregon and Idaho to look at the temperature requirements for the Columbia River with the EPA.

Cumulative Impact Analysis (see handout)

Gregg (PUD) explained that cumulative impact assessment is a NEPA requirement. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has published guidelines, and the PUD hoped the guidelines would provide insight on what needed to be done for a cumulative impact assessment. The guidelines were very generic, and one thing that was noticed was that they were set up to analyze new projects and new impacts. For an existing project and existing impacts, all the PUD would be able to do was use the document as guidance.

In general, the PUD found the following guidelines useful:

- Focus on issues that are truly meaningful.
- Focus on things that you can actually make an impact on.

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Working Group*

- In order to make any meaningful changes, other projects impacting the resource need to help reduce that impact.
- A Cumulative Impact Assessment uses other information that has been collected to help make decisions.

The group next reviewed the flow chart and discussed briefly what may need to be included in a cumulative impact assessment for natural resources. The group decided that sediment and temperature would not be considered, TDG would probably need to be included and large woody debris could be handled at the project-specific analysis. The working group will discuss the analysis more thoroughly at the next meeting.

A Study Plan to Assess Bull Trout Movement in the Mid-Columbia River (revised)

Scott (PUD) explained that the study plan was revised after it was decided to trap at Wells Dam, and some details were changed at that time.

Discussions continued on whether to release half of the Rocky Reach fish upstream and half downstream. A bull trout operation plan was developed, but Scott mentioned that he received some response from Bob Dach (NMFS) who still had some concerns. One of his concerns was with the installation of an air bubbler, which could startle the bull trout entering into the trap. NMFS preferred not to use the bubbler because it could potentially scare other fish that would come up the ladder. The other concern was in regard to the platform location, which was proposed to be located in the fish ladder where all handling would take place. The PUD preference was to conduct the tagging in the ladder because it minimized the handling and would not affect any other fish. Also, the time under anesthesia would be less than having to move fish away from the ladder prior to tagging. NMFS requested that the tagging take place outside of the ladder. Mark Miller, U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) commented that the approach NMFS took was to make the tagging and operation plan so there would be no effect. He did not see how it made a big difference other than if NMFS could not sign off with no-effect, formal consultation might have to occur. Steve (PUD) stated the issue was a professional judgment and the PUD would not do anything to discourage NMFS from coming to a no-effect conclusion.

The group then adjourned the meeting so they could tour the bull trout trapping facilities at the Rocky Reach fish ladder.

Next Meeting

To be determined.

Action Items

- ✓ PUD will generate initial list of management objective questions in regard to the study reports (fish presence and habitat and water quality monitoring). The working group will review and provide report presentation suggestions.

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
- ✓ Fish Presence and Habitat Use Survey, Working Draft
- ✓ Water Quality Monitoring Report
- ✓ Dissolved Gas Biological Effects Monitoring Study Plan, First Draft
- ✓ Water Temperature Monitoring Study Plan, First Draft
- ✓ Cumulative Impact Analysis Flow Chart
- ✓ Bull Trout Operational Plan
- ✓ A Study Plan to Assess Bull Trout Movement in the Mid-Columbia River (revised)