



## *Baker River Project License Implementation* **Aquatic Resources Group**

**Team Leader:** Arnie Aspelund (PSE), [arnie.aspelund@pse.com](mailto:arnie.aspelund@pse.com)

### **PRESENT**

Arnie Aspelund, Cary Feldmann, Mark Killgore, Jacob Venard, Scott Williams, Jory Oppenheimer, Nick Verretto, Irena Netik, Doug Bruland (PSE); Brock Applegate and Brett Barkdull (WDFW); Lorna Ellestad and Dan Berentson (Skagit County); Stan Walsh (SRSC); Greta Movassaghi (USFS), Blaine Chesterfield and Esco Bell (City of Mt. Vernon, guest), Chal Martin (City of Burlington, guest), Steve Fransen (NMFS); Bob Helton (Citizen); Phil Hilgert (R2); Lyn Wiltse (facilitator, PDSA Consulting).

**DECISIONS** – none today

**2011 ARG MEETING DATES:** Oct. 11 combined with BRCC Meeting at PSE Skagit Service Center Office (9-3 pm); Nov. 8 Conference Call (9-11 am); and Dec. 13 Meeting / Video Conference at PSE Snoqualmie and Skagit Offices (9-3 pm).

**FPTWG:** Oct. 12 from 9:00 – 3:00 at PSE Lower Baker Office in Concrete.

**Website:** You can find Baker River documents available to the resource groups such as resource group plans, reports, meeting notes, etc., via PSE.com:

<http://pse.com/aboutpse/HydroLicensing/Pages/Baker-River-Licensing.aspx>

### **ACTION ITEMS**

- Arnie Send out Mark Killgore's IPP PowerPoint to all along with these notes.
- All Send Cary suggested agenda items for October 11 BRCC meeting.
- Cary Send out compilation of comments received along with revised version of 107c Report by September 16 to ARG members for review.
- All Provide final comments on the revised 107c Report to Arnie by October 3.
- All Reserve the second Tuesday of each month in 2012 as placeholder for Baker ARG meetings.

### **PREVIOUS - STILL RELEVANT - ACTION ITEMS**

- Dan Johnson See if Corps can release GI work schedule for ARG review.
- Steve Identify the Olympia contact to coordinate re. HGMP with WDFW.
- Co-Managers Send a draft Fish Production Plan to Arnie ASAP.
- All Review / update the ARG representation list for your organization (ongoing).

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 'Tis the season of anniversaries: 8 years for Jacob, 24 for Doug and Arnie and 41 for Cary. Congratulations all around!
- Irena Netik is now the PSE Hydro Operations Manager. She will be the go-to person for issues related to flows, etc. She is very familiar with hydro operations at Baker as she was heavily involved with the HYDROPS model as a consultant during the relicensing process.



- On September 9, 35 people from the American Fisheries Society's Seattle meeting from all over the world went on a tour of all the fish facilities at the Baker Project and were duly impressed.
- SCL has opening for Fish and Aquatic Plans Project Manager

### **DECOMMISSIONING OF SPAWNING BEACHES 1-3**

Scott Williams reported that he and Kim Lane have been working together on a Request for Proposal for a consultant to develop a conceptual design based on the Statement of Work as defined by the USFS and vetted through the ARG and CRAG. They expect this to occur in October and hope to have consultant on board approximately 6 weeks after that.

### **ANNUAL FISH PRODUCTION PLAN**

Stan reported that the Fish Co-managers have begun to meet on this topic. They are working on the details of the plan, including how to divide up responsibilities appropriately. In the meantime, anything that has to do with operations should remain status quo. He will continue to keep us updated.

### **BRCC UPDATE**

Cary reported the fourth Wednesdays will continue to be reserved throughout 2011 for BRCC conference calls as needed. The next in-person meeting will be combined with the ARG meeting on October 11 and will be at the Skagit Operations Center in Burlington.

Cary sent out the summary from the working groups on August 30. Highlights from other resource groups follow:

FPTWG – Construction of the Lower Baker FSC will begin at the site on September 19. The next FPTWG meeting will be October 12 and include a field trip to observe the construction.

TRIG – Met August 4 and are continuing to develop management plans for the Burpee Hill and Alder Creek properties. Surveys are complete for the year.

RRG – The Recreation Group will meet again in October in coordination with the Law enforcement officers to conduct a lessons-learned session of the season and prioritize spending accordingly for the following year.

CRAG – The CRAG did not meet in August. Their next meeting will likely occur in October. They have been resolving program issues associated with the spawning beach decommissioning and club house construction.

### **UPDATE ON IMMINENT FLOOD DRAWDOWN (107c) PRELIMINARY REPORT**

Cary reported that Steve Hocking was very clear in answering the questions we posed to him on the conference call on September 8. The plan is now to submit the next version of the report along with comments by September 16 with final comments due October 3. PSE will submit the report to FERC by October 17. Lorna reiterated the County's desire to see analysis included in the report that demonstrates what targets can be hit for 107c within the constraints of 106 and without the Corps' Water Control Manual. They also want to see timing and discharge data for the 10% exceedance.

Cary explained that the analysis performed by Tetra Tech will not be included in the report as it was off target for what 107c was supposed to accomplish. And, based on the results of the teleconference and the need for amendment to pursue operations Skagit County has proposed, PSE sees the focus of the report as the communication protocol. Cary reiterated that if there are operations that are consistent with the license that should be considered, now would be the time to disclose them.

The intent of the communication protocol is to engage people early on in the event of a predicted flood and collectively determine the proper course of action. In accordance with the Settlement Agreement PSE will employ "reasonable best efforts" to drawdown in advance of an imminent flood to reach the target elevations. By not calling out strict if/then protocols in the report PSE is allowing for maximum flexibility to,



in consultation with ARG members, take the most appropriate action. It was agreed to take this discussion offline as Skagit County is the only ARG member making the request for additional analyses.

Dan agreed and explained that Skagit County will make comments on the report that comes out this Friday and then set up a meeting with one of the County Commissioners, Administrator, Public Works Director, members of their Legal Department and PSE to continue this discussion. Lorna announced she will let Arnie know the next time they schedule a meeting with their Board so he can share that info with the ARG.

## **OPERATIONS UPDATES**

### **Interim Protection Plan - 2011 Potential Operations**

Mark explained that the 90 day outlook shows we may be heading into a weather situation known as a "weak La Nina" with above-normal precipitation. He walked us through one chart showing potential LB operations with median inflow and another showing the same for mean inflow.

Steve (NMFS) suggested a 1 pulse scenario instead of the 2 pulse scenario discussed at the last ARG meeting. Steve explained that downramps dewater gravel bars that the newly emergent steelhead fry use as habitat. It would be preferable to have that dewatering occur once a day vs. twice. Stan concurred with Steve's analysis and explained that he is not comfortable with a generation flow duration beyond 8 hours. He would prefer 6 hours. Cary responded that this will be a flexible program. The second step can be as long or short as it needs to be. They are trying to maintain the slope so they don't end up in a forced spill situation or fail to meet later season storage targets.

Mark further offered that PSE watches these flows on a daily basis and is in constant "real-time" communication with other PSE departments including real time operations and the power marketing folks so all can collaborate in responding most appropriately to these changes.

### **Juvenile Outmigration Update / Adult Sockeye Return, Fishery Updates**

Doug delivered the entire fish facility Operations report as Kevin was otherwise occupied testing the hatchery formalin system.

Ad-clipping of all the juvenile sockeye in raceway 1 is complete. They are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through ad-clipping all sockeye in raceway 2 and should be finished by September 16. They will hold them until mid-October to early November (when the temperatures drop) and then release them into Baker Lake. We expect to have a good smolt outmigration next spring.

Coho juveniles have been ad-clipped and are being held in raceway 4. The rainbow trout look good. AI sockeye broodstock total 3,792. Pre-spawn mortality has been low.

There are 1,590 sockeye in the spawning beaches. They are starting to color up and should begin to disperse in the near future and begin natural spawning.

They will start the weekly collecting of coho from the upstream trap for hatchery broodstock by end of the week. With that there has been a request to adjust upstream fish trap record. Coho unmarked coded wire tag is critical info. Doug has been asked to insert columns for sacrificed CWT coho. They will only put the 200 they intend to spawn in the broodstock pond. This is based on the assumption that there will be a big run.

The upstream fish trap will be in daily hauling operation getting ready for coho returns.. Doug expects within a week that the numbers will really pick up.

#### **Fish Hatchery Inventory Totals:**

- Juvenile Coho: 59,899
- Juvenile Sockeye: 126,256
- Rainbow: 19,854



- Total Facility (excluding adults): 206,009 (2,938 lbs.)

### **Emergency Callout List**

Arnie asked who wants to be on the list for immediate notification in the event of a fish event that requires fish management decisions. Brett and Stan asked to be on the list and will send Arnie the most appropriate contact information for those calls. Anyone else should let Arnie know ASAP and he will add them to the list.

### **PLANS AND REPORTS**

Arnie reviewed the list showing the status of the Baker River Project Aquatic Resource Plans & Reports.

- 101: Fish Propagation Report is due to be out the end of October.
- 103: Upstream Fish Passage Report comments are due September 23.
- 104: Connectivity Plan and Report comments are due September 17.
- 105: Downstream Fish Passage Implementation Plans for UB will be to the Services and Tribes the end of the year.
- 105 Report and 106: Flow Implementation Article Report will be to the ARG for review the end of November.
- 107c will be out September 16 with comments due October 3.
- 108: Formal Draft Implementation Plan for Gravel will be out in November. They are currently working on responses to comments received.
- 505: Aquatic Riparian Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement Plan - Jacob announced that the ARHWG is currently soliciting project proposals with a due date of October 7.

### **POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR OCTOBER 11 MEETING (at Skagit Service Center in Burlington)**

- Update on IPP Operations
- Annual fish production plan
- Upstream fish trap operations
- Spawning Beach Decommissioning RFP Status
- Progress on Lower Baker FSC construction

### **MEETING EVALUATION**

#### **Worked Well**

- Got out early
- Phone system worked well
- Good information sharing
- Good attendance

#### **Do Differently**

- No suggestions