



Conference Call Minutes

Aquatic Settlement Work Group

To: Aquatic SWG Parties

Date: September 14, 2022

From: John Ferguson, Chair, Anchor QEA, LLC

Re: Final Minutes of the August 10, 2022, Aquatic SWG Conference Call

The Aquatic Settlement Work Group (SWG) met by conference call on Wednesday, August 10, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. Attendees are listed in Attachment A of these conference call minutes.

I. Summary of Action Items

1. Douglas PUD will coordinate with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) regarding possible options for surplus brood year (BY) 2022 White Sturgeon being reared at Wells Fish Hatchery and will report back to the Aquatic SWG during the conference call on September 14, 2022 (Item VI-4).
2. Douglas PUD will discuss with the CTCR who will be tagging Pacific Lamprey trapped at Priest Rapids Dam destined for translocation to the Okanogan River Basin (i.e., numbers collected beyond sample size targets for the *Wells Dam 2022 Adult Lamprey Approach and Passage Study* [2022 Adult Pacific Lamprey Study]) with passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags (Item VI-7).
3. The Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2022, will be held by conference call (Item VII-1).

II. Summary of Decisions

1. Aquatic SWG members present approved the *Statement of Agreement Regarding Wells Reservoir White Sturgeon Supplementation 2023-2026*, as revised (Item VI-2).

III. Agreements

1. There were no agreements discussed during today's conference call.

IV. Review Items

1. The draft report, *White Sturgeon Supplementation and Management Plan Implementation in the Wells Reservoir, 2020-21* (2021 White Sturgeon Supplementation Evaluation Report), was

distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris on August 9, 2022, and is available for review with edits and comments due to Andrew Gingerich by September 9, 2022 (Item VI-4).

V. Documents Finalized

1. The final *Statement of Agreement Regarding Wells Reservoir White Sturgeon Supplementation 2023-2026*, as revised, was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris following the Aquatic SWG conference call on August 10, 2022 (Item VI-2).

VI. Summary of Discussions

1. Welcome, Review Agenda, Meeting Minutes Approval, and Review of Action Items (John Ferguson):

John Ferguson welcomed the Aquatic SWG members (Attachment A). Ferguson asked for any additions or changes to the agenda. Andrew Gingerich added the draft 2021 White Sturgeon Supplementation Evaluation Report. Ralph Lampman added Pacific Lamprey Bile Acid and Environmental DNA.

The revised draft July 13, 2022, conference call minutes were reviewed. Kristi Geris said all edits and comments received from members of the Aquatic SWG were incorporated into the revised minutes. She also added distribution of the draft 2021 White Sturgeon Supplementation Evaluation Report. Aquatic SWG members present approved the July 13, 2022, conference call minutes, as revised. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) abstained because the technical representative was not present during the July 13, 2022, conference call.

Action items from the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 13, 2022, are as follows (*Note: The following italicized item numbers correspond to agenda items from the July 13, 2022, meeting*):

- *Douglas PUD will provide edits to the updated Statement of Agreement Regarding Wells Reservoir White Sturgeon Supplementation 2023-2026 to Anchor QEA, who will distribute a revised Statement of Agreement (SOA) for Aquatic SWG review, and approval during the Aquatic SWG conference call on August 10, 2022 (Item VI-2).*

A revised SOA was distributed following the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 13, 2022.

- *Douglas PUD will confirm the number of Bull Trout encountered during steelhead broodstock collection last spring 2022 that received PIT tags for inclusion in the Bull Trout Movement and Life History Investigation 2022 (2022 Bull Trout PIT Study), for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-3).*

Andrew Gingerich provided Bull Trout tagging numbers to date on July 14, 2022, which Kristi Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.

- *Douglas PUD will provide a recommendation via email by July 29, 2022, based on collection numbers to date, to either continue or discontinue trapping of Bull Trout at the Twisp Weir for PIT-tagging and inclusion in the 2022 Bull Trout PIT Study; Aquatic SWG concurrence with the recommendation will be presumed unless a member communicates otherwise (Item VI-3).*

Andrew Gingerich provided notification of plans to discontinue trapping based on zero fish collected, which was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris on July 30, 2022.

- *Douglas PUD will communicate to USFWS discussions from today's conference call regarding the 2022 Bull Trout PIT Study (Item VI-3).*

Andrew Gingerich discussed this topic with RD Nelle on July 15, 2022, via phone call.

2. DECISION: White Sturgeon Spontaneous Autopolyploidy Screening SOA (Andrew Gingerich):

The revised *Statement of Agreement Regarding Wells Reservoir White Sturgeon Supplementation 2023-2026* for approval was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris on July 13, 2022. Andrew Gingerich said feedback and comments discussed during the last meeting were incorporated into this revised SOA. There have been no changes since, and the SOA is ready for approval.

John Ferguson reviewed key components of the SOA and asked for comments or questions. Laura Heironimus suggested this edit to the third paragraph of the *Statement*:

Fish identified to have anything other than 8N ~~10N or 12N~~ chromosome types will be euthanized.

No objections were expressed.

Aquatic SWG members present approved the *Statement of Agreement Regarding Wells Reservoir White Sturgeon Supplementation 2023-2026*, as revised. The final SOA was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Geris following the Aquatic SWG conference call on August 10, 2022.

3. Brood Year 2022 White Sturgeon Rearing Update (Chas Kyger):

Chas Kyger summarized a BY 2022 White Sturgeon Rearing Update (Attachment B), which was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris prior to the conference call on August 10, 2022. Kyger said there are currently 6,445 fish on station at Wells Fish Hatchery. Fish are growing quickly this year and are on track to meet size targets at release. Mortality is low and will hopefully remain low. Douglas PUD will provide another update next month.

John Ferguson asked if the CTCR have anything to add regarding collection. Jason McLellan said the CTCR were able to supply target numbers to the Douglas PUD, Chelan PUD, and Sherman Creek programs. This year was the highest catch ever, at approximately 60,000 larvae. The CTCR were using free embryo catch as an indicator. Collection targets were met, and sampling ended when the greatest number of larvae would have been coming down. On the last night, crews only fished 4 of 10 sample stations and caught nearly 6,500 larvae. Ferguson asked about possible causes for the increased production. McLellan said it could be due to several factors. One might be due to colder river temperatures. Fish typically spawn earlier, but some may have waited due to the cooler temperatures, so there could have been more fish spawning at the same time. Or perhaps conditions this year with higher river flows induced more fish to spawn. Gametogenesis is a fairly long process, so he would not expect to see differences year-to-year due to environmental conditions within a year during the spawning period, but he does not know for sure. Also, early egg and larvae survival may have been higher this year; although, release and recapture experiments have not shown different rates compared to previous years. Additional factors could be higher survival during the pre-drift phase or lower predation due to higher river velocity. McLellan cautioned that all of these theories are speculative. Every year the crews learn something new. The CTCR did sample downstream, which has not been done for over a decade. Crews knew there were substantial numbers of larvae coming down towards the China Bend area; however, crews caught very few in this area. This supports the CTCR's hypothesis that a recruitment bottleneck occurs during exogenous feeding at the river/reservoir transition.

Andrew Gingerich said if survival numbers for fish on station continue to trend as they are, and fish continue growing quickly, the Aquatic SWG will need to discuss what to do with surplus fish. In the past, surplus fish have been returned to the CTCR. McLellan said the CTCR are prepared to take surplus fish from Wells Fish Hatchery and Sherman Creek Fish Hatchery. The CTCR gave Sherman Creek almost twice the number of fish requested, so they are expecting the potential for surplus from both locations. The CTCR's limitation is taking approximately 1,200 fish. If there is a desire to utilize surplus fish in other places, he thinks these discussions need to begin now.

McLellan said there has been discussion with Chelan PUD related to the shortfall in program last year, and he asked if there is a desire to use surplus from this year to backfill. What is the capacity at Wells Fish Hatchery to help with this? Gingerich said Douglas PUD has discussed this and he thinks it is possible to increase the Chelan PUD program by an additional 400 to 500 fish, but that discussions would have to take place with Rocky Reach Fish Forum and Joint Fisheries Parties members. With the Douglas PUD program also on station, it probably is not feasible to cover the entire shortfall from last year. He said Douglas PUD will

coordinate with the CTCR regarding possible options for surplus BY 2022 White Sturgeon being reared at Wells Fish Hatchery and will report back to the Aquatic SWG during the conference call on September 14, 2022.

4. Draft 2021 White Sturgeon Supplementation Evaluation Report (Andrew Gingerich):

Andrew Gingerich said Douglas PUD has produced these M&E reports in past years. He, Chas Kyger, and Dave Robichaud (LGL Limited) updated the template for the report. The draft 2021 White Sturgeon Supplementation Evaluation Report was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris on August 9, 2022, for approval during the Aquatic SWG conference call on October 12, 2022. Gingerich said in the distribution email, he mentioned that Douglas PUD can provide a presentation of the data if members are interested.

John Ferguson asked about the review period. Gingerich said in the email, he requested edits and comments by September 14, 2022. However, having comments by September 9, 2022, will give him time to incorporate edits before the Aquatic SWG conference call on September 14, 2022. Ferguson said there is no Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) deadline for this document, so he agreed with the September 9, 2022, review deadline. If folks need more time, the review can be extended as needed.

5. Bull Trout Tagging Effort (Andrew Gingerich):

Andrew Gingerich recalled reporting last month about the difficulty with a panel at the Twisp Weir. The Twisp Weir fished 2.5 weeks longer than normal this year and through July 2022 and did not catch a single Bull Trout. Gingerich contacted RD Nelle to let USFWS know about the challenges with the weir. This year, a total of 11 fish have received PIT tags for inclusion in the 2022 Bull Trout PIT Study, including fish captured at Wells Dam and fish collected during steelhead broodstock collection last spring. The plan is for Douglas PUD to provide an interim report, post-spawn, then try to put out the balance of tags next year. Douglas PUD will file the interim report with FERC since this study is intended to be a license requirement. No objections to this plan were expressed by Aquatic SWG members.

Gingerich said the weir will be taken out of service on August 24, 2022. During this time, mechanical crews will address the issue as well as check the entire system.

Nelle asked why the panel failed. Gingerich said he believes it was related to hydraulic equipment that raises and lowers the panels; however, the true cause will not be confirmed until inspections have been completed and repairs initiated.

6. 2022 Pacific Lamprey Translocation Update (John Rohrback):

John Rohrback said he has been providing weekly updates to the Aquatic SWG via email. He reviewed the latest 2022 Pacific Lamprey Translocation Update (Attachment C), which was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris on August 5, 2022. Rohrback noted an error in Attachment C as follows: on August 5, 2022, for the Daroga State Park releases, there were 49 PIT-only fish and 25 acoustic and PIT fish.

Rohrback said collection numbers this week have already exceeded the 200-fish capacity of the tanker, so fish collected tonight will be passed to the CTCR and moved above Wells Dam. As of yesterday, there were 41,603 Pacific Lamprey counted at Bonneville Dam and 1,223 at Priest Rapids Dam. Based on these numbers, it is likely the 170 dual-tagged and 510 PIT-only fish targeted for the 2022 Adult Pacific Lamprey Study will be achieved, and fish collected during the last weeks of trapping will likely be available for the CTCR to translocate above Wells Dam.

John Ferguson asked if the adults are larger this year. Rohrback said it seems fish lengths are about the same size as previous years.

Rohrback noted that the study plan identified the inclusion of two additional acoustic receivers upstream of the dam next to the fish ladder exits. However, this area is too noisy, and the receivers are not detecting the tag signals. The PIT-tag detection system at Pool 68 and the forebay acoustic receivers are in place and functioning.

Ralph Lampman asked if the fish going to the CTCR will be PIT-tagged, and is Douglas PUD or the CTCR doing the PIT-tagging? Rohrback said this has not yet been coordinated, but he believes PIT-tagging these fish is a worthwhile endeavor and will be figured out between the two of them.

Ferguson asked if some fish have already gone to the CTCR, and Rohrback said no. Before this week, Douglas PUD has been able to handle the numbers collected. Earlier this week, he sent an email to the CTCR notifying them about the high collection numbers this week. There have been 218 fish collected this week, which is 18 fish more than the trucker can hold. These 18 fish plus whatever is collected tonight will go to the CTCR. Presently, a total of approximately 100 fish are being collected each night.

Douglas PUD will discuss with the CTCR who will be tagging Pacific Lamprey trapped at Priest Rapids Dam destined for translocation to the Okanogan River Basin (i.e., numbers collected beyond sample size targets for the 2022 Adult Pacific Lamprey Study) with PIT tags.

Lampman said the Yakama Nation (YN) has noticed an overall larger fish size this year. Ferguson asked if fish are staying in the ocean longer or are there more food resources? Lampman said there are many possibilities. Andrew Gingerich said Douglas PUD has a robust dataset from previous years to test this hypothesis, which can be included in an annual report.

Jason McLellan asked how far upstream from Wells Dam is the nearest receiver located that is detecting tags? Rohrback said approximately 0.25-mile. *(Note: This distance was later confirmed at closer to 1 mile.)*

Lampman said the YN is trying to bring 300 adults to the Methow River Basin next Monday, August 15, 2022, mostly collected from Bonneville and John Day dams. Normally this is done later, but space is running out at the hatchery. Ferguson asked if these fish will be PIT-tagged. Lampman said the YN will try to tag the majority, if not all fish.

7. Pacific Lamprey Bile Acid and Environmental DNA (Ralph Lampman):

Ralph Lampman said the YN collected eDNA and bile acid samples from Bonneville and McNary dams, and plan to collect additional samples at Rocky Reach and Wells dams. The YN plans to collect bile acid samples from Wells Dam in coordination with Douglas PUD's collection of eDNA samples at Wells Dam.

Chas Kyger said Douglas PUD was planning to collect eDNA samples during September and October 2022. Douglas PUD is open to specific dates; however, it is best if Douglas PUD coordinates the timing of the sample collection with the YN. Lampman said September will work well this year in terms of run timing. Kyger said Douglas PUD will wait to hear from the YN.

VII. Administration

1. Upcoming Meetings (John Ferguson):

The Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2022, will be held by conference call.

Other upcoming meetings include October 12 and November 9, 2022 (location to be determined).

List of Attachments

Attachment A List of Attendees

Attachment B BY 2022 White Sturgeon Rearing Update

Attachment C 2022 Pacific Lamprey Translocation Update

Attachment A - Attendees

Name	Role	Organization
John Ferguson	Aquatic SWG Chairman	Anchor QEA, LLC
Kristi Geris	Administration/Technical Support	Anchor QEA, LLC
Andrew Gingerich	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Douglas PUD
Chas Kyger	Aquatic SWG Technical Alternate	Douglas PUD
John Rohrback	Aquatic SWG Technical Support	Douglas PUD
RD Nelle	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Patrick Verhey	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Laura Heironimus	Aquatic SWG Technical Alternate	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Ralph Lampman	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Yakama Nation
Jason McLellan	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation