

# Final Conference Call Minutes

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## *Aquatic Settlement Work Group*

**To:** Aquatic SWG Parties **Date:** September 15, 2016  
**From:** John Ferguson, Chair (Anchor QEA, LLC)  
**Re:** Final Minutes of the August 10, 2016 Aquatic SWG Conference Call

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The Aquatic Settlement Work Group (SWG) met by conference call on Wednesday, August 10, 2016, from 10:00 to 11:20 a.m. Attendees are listed in Attachment A of these conference call minutes.

## **I. Summary of Action Items**

1. Bob Rose will discuss internally the Colville Confederated Tribes' (CCT's) proposed criteria for culling juvenile white sturgeon and will report back to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-1).
2. Douglas PUD will consider requesting permission from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to combine all Aquatic Settlement Agreement (ASA) Annual Reports and deadlines into one submittal and will report back to the Aquatic SWG following completion of the 2015 ASA reporting season (May 31; Item VI-1).
3. There will be a formal introduction of the new Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) Aquatic SWG Technical Representative, Breean Zimmerman, at the next Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2016 (Item VI-2).
4. Douglas PUD will distribute a Doodle Poll to convene a technical subgroup to discuss the future of the Douglas PUD White Sturgeon Program (Item VI-4). *(Note: Andrew Gingerich distributed a poll following the meeting on August 10, 2016.)*
5. Updates on discussions about the future of the Douglas PUD White Sturgeon Program will be provided during each Aquatic SWG monthly meeting, with the goal to make a decision by the Aquatic SWG meeting on January 11, 2017 (Item VI-4).
6. Douglas PUD will distribute a Revised Draft 2015 White Sturgeon Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Report for a 10-day review, with plans to request approval of the draft report during the Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2016 (Item VI-4). *(Note: Andrew Gingerich provided the revised draft report, as well as a comment and response document, to Kristi Geris on August 15, 2016, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.)*
7. Douglas PUD will provide a Draft ASA Document Approval Process Statement of Agreement (SOA) for discussion during the Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2016 (Item VI-5).
8. **The Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2016, will be held by conference call (Item VII-1).**

## II. Summary of Decisions

1. There were no decisions approved during today's conference call.

## III. Agreements

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

## IV. Review Items

1. Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on August 15, 2016, notifying them the Revised Draft 2015 White Sturgeon M&E Report is available for a 10-day review period, with comments due to Andrew Gingerich by Thursday, August 25, 2016 (Item VI-4).

## V. Documents Finalized

1. There are no documents that have been recently finalized.

## VI. Summary of Discussion

### 1. Welcome, Review Agenda, Meeting Minutes Approval, and Review of Action Items

(John Ferguson): John Ferguson welcomed the Aquatic SWG members (attendees are listed in Attachment A) and asked for any additions or other changes to the agenda. The following revisions were requested:

- Andrew Gingerich added an update on the Draft 2015 White Sturgeon M&E Report.
- Steve Lewis requested an update on bull trout and Pacific lamprey activities.

The revised draft July 13, 2016, conference call minutes were reviewed. Kristi Geris said all comments and revisions received from members of the Aquatic SWG were incorporated into the revised minutes. Aquatic SWG members present approved the July 13, 2016, conference call minutes, as revised.

Action items from the last Aquatic SWG conference call on July 13, 2016, are as follows (note: the following italicized item numbers correspond to agenda items from the July 13, 2016, conference call):

- *Bob Rose will discuss internally the CCT's proposed criteria for culling juvenile white sturgeon and will report back to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-1).*

This action item will be carried forward.

- *Douglas PUD will consider requesting permission from FERC to combine all ASA Annual Reports and deadlines into one submittal and will report back to the Aquatic SWG following completion of the 2015 ASA reporting season (May 31; Item VI-1).*  
This action item will be carried forward.
- *Steve Lewis will provide edits on the Regional Pacific Lamprey Workshop minutes to Kristi Geris, and Geris will verify the edits with respective parties and redistribute the revised minutes once finalized (Item VI-2).*  
Lewis provided edits to the minutes on July 14, 2016, and the revised final minutes were distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Geris on July 18, 2016.
- *Douglas PUD will provide an update on Wells Project total dissolved gas (TDG) levels observed to date in 2016, and the forecast for the remainder of the year, during the Aquatic SWG meeting on August 10, 2016 (Item VI-3).*  
This will be discussed during today's meeting.
- *The Aquatic SWG will further discuss the future of the Douglas PUD White Sturgeon Program during the Aquatic SWG meeting on August 10, 2016 (Item VI-6).*  
This will be discussed during today's meeting.
- *Douglas PUD will provide a Draft ASA Document Approval Process SOA for discussion during the Aquatic SWG meeting on August 10, 2016 (Item VI-7).*  
This will be discussed during today's meeting.

**2. Washington State Department of Ecology Aquatic SWG Technical Representative – Breean Zimmerman** (John Ferguson): John Ferguson said because Breean Zimmerman is not present, there will be a formal introduction of the new Ecology Aquatic SWG Technical Representative at the next Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2016.

**3. Wells Project TDG Update/Forecast** (Andrew Gingerich): Andrew Gingerich recalled a request by Patrick Verhey during the last Aquatic SWG meeting on July 13, 2016, for an update on Wells Project TDG levels observed to date in 2016 and the forecast for the remainder of the year. Gingerich said, as requested, he compiled a Wells Dam 2016 Mid-Season TDG Compliance presentation (Attachment B), which was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris prior to the meeting on August 10, 2016.

Gingerich said this year was an odd flow year compared to the 10-year average, with the freshet occurring in April when it typically occurs in June and July. He noted a forebay sensor failure during the July 4th holiday weekend, which resulted in a loss of 1 week of data. He said the sensor has since been fixed. He also noted a power failure occurred in late July of 2016, resulting in a loss of 3 days of data from the tailrace sensor. He said, however, these data losses are insignificant in terms of compliance, and the Wells Project was well below water quality standards before the sensors failed and after the sensors were restored. He said, to date, 100% TDG compliance has been achieved in the Wells Dam tailrace. He added that there were 3 days in April 2016 where the Rocky Reach Dam forebay was out of compliance, which was associated

with the high flow experienced in April 2016, as well as unit maintenance and outages at Wells Dam during this time.

Gingerich reviewed the State standards for TDG, as reported in slide 3 of Attachment B. He noted that a fish passage TDG adjustment for the 2016 spill season was obtained, which allows for higher TDG values associated with increased spill or bypass volumes and to increase juvenile survival through the project. He reviewed Slide 4 of Attachment B, which depicts daily average river flow observed at Wells Dam this year compared to the 10-year average. He said Douglas PUD scheduled bi-annual unit and transformer maintenance during the month of April, because historically, this has been a safe time to do so since the freshet is typically in June and July, and April flows are moderate. He noted, however, the highest river flow occurred during the last 2 weeks of April this year. He said he believes this was due to maintenance activities at Grand Coulee Dam.

Gingerich reviewed Slide 5 of Attachment B, which depicts 15-minute interval data points of the Wells Dam forebay TDG. He said, because there is no anadromous fish passage at Chief Joseph Dam, the project does not have a fish passage TDG adjustment from Ecology, and therefore, water arriving at Wells Dam should be 110% or less. He also noted the data gap due to the lost sensor during the July 4th holiday weekend. He said Slide 6 of Attachment B is the same as Slide 4, and he reminded Aquatic SWG members that the water quality standards state that an operator of a dam is not held to the TDG standards when the river flow exceeds the 7-day, 10-year-frequency (7Q10) flood, which at Wells Dam is 246,000 cubic feet per second.

Gingerich reviewed Slide 7 of Attachment B, which shows the Wells Dam tailrace being in compliance with the 110% non-bypass standard from December 2015 to April 2016. He said, although values looked high in early April 2016, there were no 120% 12-C High or 125% hourly exceedances in the Wells Dam tailrace. He also noted the black arrow, which indicates when a sensor was lost due to power failure.

Gingerich reviewed Slide 8 of Attachment B, which depicts daily average TDG values in the Rocky Reach Dam forebay. He said the goal is to remain below the 115% 12C-high TDG standard; however, TDG in the Rocky Reach Dam forebay exceeded this standard on April 18, 19, and 23, 2016. He noted that these exceedances occurred during the highest river flow of this year. He said Wells Dam did not have the powerhouse capacity for high river flow because of biannual maintenance, so when the unexpected high flow occurred, operators had no choice but to spill the water.

Steve Lewis asked if Douglas PUD conducted biological monitoring associated with the three observed non-compliance events in the Rocky Reach Dam forebay. Gingerich said no, the Gas Abatement Plan only requires biological monitoring when TDG exceeds 125% for an

extended period of time. He added, in his experience, when Wells Dam has experienced high TDG values associated with high freshet flow and biological monitoring was conducted, it has not been until about 125% TDG when gas bubble trauma (GBT) is observed in smolts. He said further, high TDG values need to be sustained. He said if high TDG values are experienced only for a few hours, no GBT has been observed.

John Ferguson asked if there is preseason coordination between Grand Coulee Dam and Grant, Chelan, and Douglas PUDs to coordinate outflow and maintenance schedules. Gingerich said yes, the PUDs and Grand Coulee Dam operators convene an annual preseason meeting, and Grand Coulee Dam also distributes weekly river forecasts (although, these forecasts are modified throughout the week). He said he believes TDG violations correlate with power sales and hydrosystem operations; however, he feels he still needs to gain a better understanding of how power generation, sales, and flow forecasts throughout the Columbia River impact TDG compliance. He said there is a lot of communication, but this is not to say that coordination cannot be improved.

Lewis asked who is at fault when TDG exceedances occur and asked if these exceedances might warrant additional measures in the spill playbook. Gingerich said the fault is on the operator (i.e., an exceedance at Wells Dam is owned by Douglas PUD). He said Douglas PUD submits a water quality report to Ecology and FERC showing how Douglas PUD plans to comply with the water quality standards. He said, currently, there are no fines *per se* associated to TDG since Douglas PUD is currently on a 10-year compliance schedule. He noted, occasionally, gas abatement plans are not developed at U.S. Army Corp of Engineer (USACE) projects, and it is difficult to follow State standards when USACE projects may not have the same standards. He said, with regard to exceedances in 2016, if Wells Dam was at least a nine-unit plant (instead of seven), and with accurate daily forecasts of river flow and below the 7Q10 threshold, there should have been no issues with meeting TDG standards. He said, once river flow exceeds the 7Q10 threshold, TDG standards are waived due to flood conditions. He said if Douglas PUD knew there would be high river flow in April 2016, the maintenance would not have been scheduled during that time. He said, typically, April is ideal for maintenance. He said, when factors change last minute, it complicates things.

**4. Wells White Sturgeon (Andrew Gingerich):**

Future of the Douglas PUD White Sturgeon Program

John Ferguson recalled discussing during the last Aquatic SWG meeting on July 13, 2016, that 2016 was the last year of collection under the current Douglas PUD white sturgeon program SOA, and 2017 will be the last year of release. Ferguson said the Aquatic SWG needs to discuss how to move forward with the program, per Douglas PUD's FERC license.

Andrew Gingerich recalled Douglas PUD's FERC license requirement to plant no more than 15,000 fish in years 5 to 10 of the license, which is in addition to the 20,000 fish planted in the first 5 years of the license, totaling 35,000 fish. He said 15,000 fish divided by 5 years equals 3,000 fish per year, which is less than the stocking targets for the first 4 years of stocking. He said this target may be further reduced based on M&E data and consideration of carrying capacity. He said survival estimates in past reports will increase as fish grow and recruit better to the gear. He said he and Chad Jackson plan to run calculations based on findings from Grant and Chelan PUDs. Gingerich suggested convening a subgroup to discuss these details sooner rather than later, as Jason McLellan has also previously suggested, in order to reach an agreement in time, secure contracts, and develop and approve documents prior to collection next June 2017. Gingerich said he reviewed Grant PUD's recent white sturgeon SOA, noting that he believes some components may also be a part of Douglas PUD's discussions. He said, however, Grant PUD's and Douglas PUD's respective White Sturgeon Management Plans are not consistent. He said, for example, the stocking numbers may be slightly different, and the term, 'harvest,' is included differently in the Grant PUD management plan. Gingerich recommended the Aquatic SWG review the Aquatic SWG-approved Douglas PUD White Sturgeon Management Plan to help keep requirements and goals straight.

Steve Lewis asked if Douglas PUD has a sense of the scope of downstream migration of released individuals based on preliminary data to date. Gingerich said, based on acoustic data to date, emigration is estimated to be 2 to 5%. He added that McLellan commented in the Draft 2015 White Sturgeon M&E Report that these emigration values should be considered conservative estimates. Gingerich said some fish migrated into the Okanogan River, but it is uncertain whether those fish only temporarily left the Wells Reservoir. He said a couple fish were detected at Rocky Reach Dam, and only one Wells Project white sturgeon was captured during the entire Chelan PUD M&E effort.

Lewis asked if it would be useful for Douglas PUD to use a Grant PUD or Chelan PUD SOA as a template to start drafting the Douglas PUD SOA. Gingerich said Douglas PUD is not against this idea; however, he would want to be sure the entire Aquatic SWG also agrees this is the best approach. He said he is not sure using fish per river kilometer (RKM) is the best approach to establishing carrying capacity, because the reservoirs are different in terms of productivity and area. He added that he is open to considering it; however, he cautioned about applying certain metrics universally. He said the Wells Reservoir length is roughly 35 RKM. McLellan said the CCT approved the Grant PUD and Chelan PUD SOAs for the sake of consensus and moving forward; however, they and the Yakama Nation (YN) provided letters outlining their concerns with the SOAs. He suggested reviewing and considering these letters prior to and during drafting of an SOA for Douglas PUD. *(Note: The CCT and YN letters, which were attachments to the Grant and Chelan PUDs SOAs, were distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris following the meeting on August 10, 2016 [Attachments C and D].)*

McLellan said, at this point, he believes the Aquatic SWG needs to discuss larger next steps and not necessarily small details. He said he does not mean to downplay discussions on densities; rather, he is not sure the Aquatic SWG is ready for those discussions today. Gingerich said he was only trying to make best use of these meetings and not lose forward momentum on the topic. Lewis agreed with McLellan regarding the benefit of first reviewing comments from the CCT and the YN regarding the Grant PUD and Chelan PUD SOAs. Lewis also agreed it will be beneficial to run calculations and further discuss conservation versus harvest requirements. He said USFWS prefers to err on the side of caution. Gingerich suggested that McLellan summarize the CCT's comments on the Grant PUD and Chelan PUD SOAs. McLellan said in summary, comments included: 1) presence of a lot of extraneous information, including inaccuracies and it did not reflect the process by which the CCT used to reach its decision to approve the documents; 2) issues with density calculations; 3) lack of description of adult white sturgeon, which density calculations were derived; and 4) unclear model assumptions that were not necessarily agreed upon were included in the SOAs. He said these comments are applicable to both SOAs, and the CCT requests that these issues are considered while drafting and approving future SOAs.

Jackson said the Grant and Chelan PUDs processes were long and arduous, and the technical and policy representatives struggled to reach agreement. He said the resulting SOAs were the best compromise the groups could agree to. He said, for Douglas PUD's process, the policy realm is not even on the table. He agreed with Gingerich's suggestion to convene a small workgroup to address outstanding technical details, and hopefully agreement can be reached within the Aquatic SWG without involving the policy level. McLellan also agreed with Gingerich and Jackson, noting that a lot was learned through the Grant and Chelan PUDs processes, which is why McLellan suggested the Aquatic SWG review the CCT and YN letters and consider these issues up front.

Ferguson asked about a deadline for reaching agreement in order to avoid delaying collection of brood year 2017 fish. Gingerich suggested reaching agreement by the end of December 2016 or beginning of January 2017, considering the first quarter of each year is always busy with annual reporting. McLellan agreed with the proposed deadline, and said agreement may not be needed on numbers by that date; however, agreement on source is needed.

Douglas PUD will distribute a Doodle Poll to convene a technical subgroup to discuss the future of the Douglas PUD White Sturgeon Program. Updates on discussions about the future of the Douglas PUD White Sturgeon Program will be provided during each Aquatic SWG monthly meeting, with a goal to make a decision by the Aquatic SWG meeting on January 11, 2017.

*(Note: Gingerich distributed a poll following the meeting on August 10, 2016.)*

### Draft 2015 White Sturgeon M&E Report

Andrew Gingerich said Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on June 29, 2016, notifying them that the Revised Draft 2015 White Sturgeon M&E Report was available for review, with comments due to Gingerich by August 3, 2016. He added that Douglas PUD planned to request approval of the draft report during the Aquatic SWG meeting on August 10, 2016. Gingerich said comments on the draft report were received from the CCT on August 3, 2016, which were distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Geris that same day. Gingerich said about 75% of the comments have been addressed by Douglas PUD, and the remaining comments are pending review by LGL Unlimited. Douglas PUD will distribute a Revised Draft 2015 White Sturgeon M&E Report for a 10-day review, with plans to request approval of the draft report during the Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2016. *(Note: Gingerich provided the revised draft report, as well as a comment and response document, to Geris on August 15, 2016, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.)*

5. **Draft ASA Document Approval Process SOA** (Andrew Gingerich): Andrew Gingerich said this SOA is still being drafted and vetted internally. Douglas PUD will provide a Draft ASA Document Approval Process SOA for discussion during the Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2016.

6. **Bull Trout and Pacific Lamprey Updates** (Andrew Gingerich):

#### Bull Trout

Andrew Gingerich said monitoring of bull trout is ongoing. He said staff are also closely monitoring the voltage in the detection arrays as days are getting shorter (the arrays are solar powered). He said he is coordinating with Greg Mackey (Douglas PUD Habitat Conservation Plan Hatchery Committee Representative) on removing the trap boxes at the Twisp Weir, as brood collection is complete. Gingerich said the trap boxes will be removed prior to the post-spawn downstream migration.

#### Pacific Lamprey

Andrew Gingerich said Douglas PUD is moving forward with the 2016 Pacific lamprey study. He said fish collection and tagging will begin next week.

## **VII. Next Meetings**

1. **Upcoming meetings** (John Ferguson): The Aquatic SWG meeting on September 14, 2016, will be held by conference call.

Upcoming meetings are as follows: September 14, 2016 (conference call); October 12, 2016 (TBD); and November 9, 2016 (TBD).

## **List of Attachments**

Attachment A – List of Attendees

Attachment B – Wells Dam 2016 Mid-Season TDG Compliance Presentation

Attachment C – Final Priest Rapids White Sturgeon Stocking SOA, with letters

Attachment D – Final Rocky Reach White Sturgeon Stocking SOA, with letters

## Attachment A List of Attendees

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Organization</b>
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	Technical Support	Douglas PUD
Steve Lewis	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Patrick Verhey	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Chad Jackson	Technical Support	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jason McLellan	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Colville Confederated Tribes