

Final Conference Call Minutes



Aquatic Settlement Work Group

To: Aquatic SWG Parties **Date:** July 9, 2015
From: John Ferguson, Chairman (Anchor QEA, LLC)
Re: Final Minutes of the June 10, 2015 Aquatic SWG Conference Call

The Aquatic Settlement Work Group (SWG) met by conference call on Wednesday, June 10, 2015, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Attendees are listed in Attachment A of these meeting minutes.

I. Summary of Action Items

1. Douglas PUD will contact the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) regarding Pat Irle's replacement as the Ecology Aquatic SWG Technical Representative (Item VI-1).
2. The Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT), Douglas PUD, and John Ferguson will discuss developing guidelines for hatchery rearing of juvenile sturgeon. The path forward will be considered during an Aquatic SWG meeting in summer 2015 (Item VI-1).
3. Douglas PUD will prepare a draft letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) requesting permission to combine all Aquatic Settlement Agreement (ASA) Annual Reports and deadlines into one submittal, and provide the draft letter to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG. The Aquatic SWG will review and discuss the draft letter at a future meeting (Item VI-1).
4. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Douglas PUD will continue coordination with the Rocky Reach Fish Forum (RRFF) and Priest Rapids Fish Forum (PRFF) regarding potential lamprey translocation and tagging opportunities, as they arise (Item VI-1).
5. Andrew Gingerich, Bob Rose, and John Ferguson will coordinate on developing an agenda item regarding potential lamprey translocation and tagging opportunities to discuss during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 8, 2015 (Item VI-1).
6. The Yakama Nation (YN) will present a summary of recent YN lamprey translocation efforts during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 8, 2015 (Item VI-1).

7. Kristi Geris will coordinate with RD Nelle (USFWS) regarding access to the Aquatic SWG Extranet Site (Item VI-2). *(Note: Geris helped Nelle access the Extranet Site following the meeting on June 10, 2015.)*
8. Chas Kyger will discuss the statistical design of the Aquatic SWG-approved 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Evaluation Study, specifically regarding sample site selection, during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 8, 2015 (Item VI-2).
9. Andrew Gingerich will provide the Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT)-Tag Information System (PTAGIS) file for brood year (BY) 2014 Wells White Sturgeon releases to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-3). *(Note: Gingerich provided these data to Geris on June 19, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.)*
10. **The Aquatic SWG meeting on July 8, 2015, will be held by conference call, and a date for the next in-person meeting will be discussed at that time (Item VII-1).**

II. Summary of Decisions

1. The Aquatic SWG members present approved the 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Evaluation Study Plan (Item VI-2).

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 May 26, 2015, notifying them the draft Twisp Weir Operations Plan is available for a 30-day review period, with edits and comments due to Andrew Gingerich by Friday, June 26, 2015 (Item VI-4).

V. Documents Finalized

1. Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on June 12, 2015, notifying them that the Final 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Evaluation Study Plan is now available for download from the Aquatic SWG Extranet Site (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 (attendees are listed in Attachment A) and opened the meeting. Ferguson reviewed the agenda and asked for additions or other changes to the agenda. No additions or changes were requested.

Kristi Geris asked if Ecology had provided any updates on a replacement for Pat Irle as the Ecology Aquatic SWG Technical Representative. Andrew Gingerich said they have not, and that he will contact Ecology to inquire about this.

The revised draft May 13, 2015, 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, and there were no outstanding edits or questions to discuss. Aquatic SWG members present approved the May 13, 2015, conference call minutes, as revised.

Ferguson reviewed action items from the last Aquatic SWG conference call on May 13, 2015, and follow-up discussions were as follows (*note: italicized item numbers below correspond to agenda items from the May 13, 2015 meeting*):

- *The CCT, Douglas PUD, and John Ferguson will discuss developing guidelines for hatchery rearing of juvenile sturgeon. The path forward will be considered during an Aquatic SWG meeting in summer 2015 (Item VI-1).*

Ferguson recalled the plan to hold this discussion in-person when the Aquatic SWG convenes the next in-person meeting. This action item will be carried forward.

- *Douglas PUD will update the Aquatic SWG when they know more about the feasibility of tagging white sturgeon on a work boat equipped with a sling, as opposed to on the shore, during white sturgeon monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts in 2015 (Item VI-1).*

Andrew Gingerich said that last week, Douglas PUD ordered a davit arm for hoisting fish on board, which should arrive within 4 weeks. He said a research boat is being modified to conduct on-boat tagging, as discussed, and that everything should be in place in time for tagging efforts in September 2015. He added that once tagging efforts are underway, Douglas PUD will let the Aquatic SWG know if the davit arm and newly modified research boat perform as expected.

- *Douglas PUD will provide the final 2014 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-1).*

Andrew Gingerich provided the final report on May 18, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.

- *Douglas PUD will prepare a draft letter to FERC requesting permission to combine all ASA Annual Reports and deadlines into one submittal, and provide the draft letter to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG. The Aquatic SWG will review and discuss the draft letter at a future meeting (Item VI-1).*

Andrew Gingerich said he will develop a draft letter this coming month. He recalled that the 2014 annual reports were just filed with FERC at the end of

May 2015, which Douglas PUD wanted to complete before developing this letter. This action item will be carried forward.

- *USFWS and Douglas PUD will continue coordination with the RRF and PRFF regarding potential lamprey translocation and tagging opportunities, as they arise (Item VI-7).*

Andrew Gingerich and RD Nelle indicated they have not recently discussed this action item with Steve Lewis, nor have they received any updates from Lewis. This action item will be carried forward. Bob Rose requested a brief recap of this discussion. Gingerich summarized that Lewis suggested that Douglas PUD might be viewed favorably if they participated in more regional lamprey translocation and M&E efforts. Gingerich said Douglas PUD is supportive of this idea so long as the Aquatic SWG is also supportive of the proposed activities, and also has the opportunity to thoroughly discuss and reach consensus regarding associated risks. John Ferguson added that this discussion arose while discussing recent YN lamprey translocation efforts, which also resulted in the action item below. Rose suggested continuing this discussion either today, or during the next Aquatic SWG meeting. Ferguson suggested discussing this topic next month in the interest of first better organizing everyone's thoughts, and, second, perhaps in-person and with Ralph Lampman. Rose agreed, and added that the YN is gearing up for another lamprey effort and may have additional lamprey available for translocation opportunities. He suggested maybe including all three Mid-Columbia PUDs on this effort (i.e., Douglas PUD, Chelan PUD, and Grant PUD). Patrick Verhey also suggested that translocating lamprey upstream of Wells Dam may be helpful to the 2016 passage study, noting that it may be beneficial having pheromone signals above Wells Dam. Ferguson suggested including other lamprey experts in these discussions, such as Lampman, Andy Dittman (NMFS), and Mary Moser (NMFS). Ferguson said Dittman and Moser, both of the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center, have several years of experience with pheromone exposure. Gingerich, Rose, and Ferguson agreed to coordinate on developing an agenda item regarding potential lamprey translocation and tagging opportunities to discuss during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 8, 2015.

- *The USFWS will contact Ralph Lampman regarding possibly presenting a summary of recent YN lamprey translocation efforts at the next Aquatic SWG in-person meeting (Item VI-7).*

RD Nelle said he has not received an update from Steve Lewis on this action item. Bob Rose said he can provide this summary on recent YN lamprey translocation efforts during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 8, 2015. *(Note: Kristi Geris notified Lewis that Rose is addressing this action item.)*

- *The Aquatic SWG meeting on June 10, 2015, will be held by conference call, and a date for the next in-person meeting will be discussed at that time (Item VII-1).*

Observed.

2. DECISION: Draft 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Evaluation Study Plan

(Andrew Gingerich): Andrew Gingerich said Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on April 24, 2015, notifying them the 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Evaluation Study Plan was available for a 30-day review period, with edits and comments due to Chas Kyger by Monday, May 25, 2015. Gingerich said Douglas PUD would like to obtain approval of the plan and move forward with sampling as soon as possible. He explained that sampling is proposed during several different times of the year to capture various reservoir elevations. He said the backpack shocker is also expected to arrive any day now. Comments and questions were discussed, as follows:

Sample locations

Bob Rose asked if only 20 sites are proposed for sampling, or will there potentially be more. Gingerich said Kyger would know for certain; however, he suspects whatever is stated in the plan is the intention. Gingerich also said that Douglas PUD recognized the entire reservoir cannot be sampled, so the goal was to select random locations for sampling while still capturing different habitat types and focus on habitat type that would be expected to hold juvenile lamprey. Rose questioned whether 20 randomly selected sites could provide the statistical confidence needed to confirm or deny lamprey presence. He said based on the YN's experience, there seems to be a lot of value in sampling areas where lamprey will likely be, just to be able to locate them. He added that this may be very biased; however, at least it increases the chances of locating lamprey. He said for instance, he suspects very few lamprey to be present in the mainstem Columbia River upstream of the Okanogan River, and suggested not sampling there at all. He also noted that only one sampling point is proposed around the mouth of the Methow River and suggested sampling many more locations in that area. He said if this study is only preliminary, this year can be used to gain experience, and then the study can be refined during the next few years; however, if this is a single-year study, he fears Douglas PUD may not get the data they are hoping for.

Gingerich said these are valid concerns and appreciates the feedback. He also added that receiving this feedback earlier during the comment window is much more helpful since it allows for incorporation and critical thought. He said Kyger spent quite a bit of time on sample locations, including running occupancy models, which indicated some level of confidence that a developed occupancy model is predictive of presence and therefore robust. Gingerich suggested that Kyger address this comment when he is available, and Rose requested that Kyger discuss the statistical design of the study during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 8, 2015. Gingerich agreed.

Sample elevations

Rose suggested, if not already planned, sampling be conducted during low-reservoir elevations so this does not need to be addressed later. He said there are points in the reservoir that may be wadeable water at one time, and high and dry at others.

Gingerich said 95% of the time, the Wells Project is at full pool (within 780 to 781 feet above mean sea level). He said the intention of the plan is to conduct the bulk of the sampling during normal reservoir elevations, but also to conduct some sampling during lower elevations, which can occur from time to time. He said for instance, sampling during lower reservoir elevations is planned in September 2015, because the reservoir will be drawn down to facilitate work the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is conducting at Chief Joseph Dam and the Methow Groins rehabilitation work (see Agenda Item VI-5 below).

Rose asked if all electroshocking will be conducted in wadeable water, or if it will also occur in deeper water. Gingerich said he believes all electroshocking will occur in wadeable water, since the intent of the study, as read in the Pacific Lamprey Management Plan, is to address areas that might be affected by Project Operations. RD Nelle noted that in higher reservoir elevations, the sampling team needs to be able to electroshock about 1 foot beyond the intended sampling location to be consistent with sampling during lower reservoir elevations.

Study duration

John Ferguson asked about the duration of this study (e.g., a 1-year study, 3-year study, etc.). Gingerich said this study is a requirement under the Pacific Lamprey Management Plan, which indicates that, “within three years of the effective date of the new license, Douglas PUD shall implement a one-year study to examine presence and relative abundance of juvenile Pacific lamprey in habitat areas within the Project that may be affected by Project operations. As part of this measure, Douglas PUD shall identify areas of potential juvenile Pacific lamprey habitat for future evaluation. Sampling of these areas will assess presence/absence and relative abundance. Any sampling methodologies used in support of this activity will require coordination with the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Coordinating Committee and regulatory approval of the federal and state agencies.”

Gingerich explained that “affected by Project operations” means the study should focus only on the shoreline. He said to address, “identifying habitat for future evaluation,” Douglas PUD plans to classify Type 1 and Type 2 habitat (i.e., preferred and suitable habitat, respectively), and randomly sample those habitats where lamprey are expected to be found. He said Douglas PUD does not plan to sample where lamprey are not expected to be found. He said, “any sampling methodologies will require coordination with the HCP Coordinating Committee and federal and state agencies,” means Douglas

PUD will make sure the study does not impact Endangered Species Act-listed salmonid species or bull trout. He said Douglas PUD does not plan to sample through the winter; however, if the Aquatic SWG believes there may be value in doing so, Douglas PUD can consider this.

Lamprey presence

Rose said on a relative scale, there are not many lamprey in the Wells Reservoir. He said, however, this may change at some point. He added that the results of this study and interpretation of information may also change if there are more lamprey in the reservoir. He said he applauds this study, and that he believes this is a great start as a pilot; however, he hopes that when there are more juvenile lamprey in the tributaries and mainstem that could potentially be affected by Project operations, this study will need to be repeated and data refined.

Ferguson noted Douglas PUD's plans to build an occupancy model, which he suggested can also be tested in future studies. Patrick Verhey agreed with Rose's comments, noting the low numbers of adults and low productivity upstream of Wells Dam. Verhey said he hopes more lamprey reach above Wells Dam via adult passage at the dam, at which point, he also suggested conducting this study again. Nelle cautioned concluding that lamprey are not present at a particular location in the event that no lamprey are captured. He questioned the level of confidence that will be needed to make this determination. Gingerich assured Nelle that Douglas PUD's proposed study has been given a great deal of thought and is more robust than other recent studies in the Mid-Columbia Basin that Nelle may be familiar with. Nelle said he is having issues accessing the Aquatic SWG Extranet Site, and has not had the opportunity to thoroughly review Douglas PUD's plan. Geris said she will coordinate with Nelle regarding accessing the Aquatic SWG Extranet Site. *(Note: Geris helped Nelle access the Extranet Site following the meeting on June 10, 2015.)*

The Aquatic SWG members present approved the 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Evaluation Study Plan. Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on June 12, 2015, notifying them that the final plan is available for download from the Aquatic SWG Extranet Site.

3. White Sturgeon Update (Andrew Gingerich):

BY 2014 Releases

Andrew Gingerich said on June 1 and 2, 2015, a total of 5,007 yearling white sturgeon were released into the Wells Project. He said as part of Douglas PUD's outreach effort, a total of 25 yearling white sturgeon were released with two high school and middle school classes from the City of Bridgeport, where students helped scan PIT-tags and obtain measurements prior to release. He said the other 4,982 yearling

white sturgeon were released at river mile 537.5 near Washburn Island, which is the same release location as last year (BY 2013 releases).

Gingerich said when the BY 2014 white sturgeon were tagged on April 27 and 29, 2015, average fish weight was only 93 grams. He reminded the Aquatic SWG that an agreement on white sturgeon releases was reached only 1 month prior, so hatchery staff worked hard to grow fish to that size. He said at the time of release, average fish growth was 46% in terms of body mass since tagging, which translated to a median fish size of about 137 grams at release. He said this was smaller than the overall average fish size last year, but similar in size to the Marion Drain fish that were released at the earlier date in May 2014. Jason McLellan asked if Douglas PUD plans to distribute the BY 2014 fish data. Gingerich said he will provide the PTAGIS file for BY 2014 Wells White Sturgeon releases to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG. *(Note: Gingerich provided these data to Geris on June 19, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.)*

M&E Update

Gingerich said within 45 minutes of the fish being released into the water, all 49 acoustically-tagged fish were detected about 600 meters away from the release location, which means all 49 tags were functioning as expected. He said after 1 week in the reservoir, most fish appeared to be holding near the release location or slightly upstream. He said one fish was detected near the City of Pateros by the mouth of the Methow River. He said no fish have been detected in the Okanogan River. He said Douglas PUD continues to work on data management with LGL Unlimited, Inc., and will provide updates as they become available.

BY 2015 Spawning

Gingerich said on May 28 and 29, 2015, spawning of BY 2015 direct gamete-origin fish took place at Marion Drain. He applauded Donella Miller (YN) and her crew at Marion Drain. Gingerich said this was another successful year, with 85 half- and full-sibling families produced from 9 maternal and 10 paternal contributors. He noted that these crosses were produced in only 2 days. He said fish have not yet been moved, because at the time, there was not enough space at Wells Hatchery. He said tomorrow, however, larvae from the direct gamete-origin fish will be transported from Marion Drain to Wells Hatchery. He said this year, less direct gamete origin fish, or fish from Marion Drain, will be brought back to Wells Hatchery compared to the roughly 170,000 larvae brought back last year. He said the fish arriving at Wells Hatchery should be close to fully absorbing their yolk sacs, so Hatchery Staff will start feeding them when they arrive at the hatchery.

Ferguson asked how many larvae are being brought back to Wells Hatchery. Gingerich estimated about 30,000 which should be a general mix of all 85 families. He said the

vastly lower number than last year is an effort to not be wasteful, considering that none of the 170,000 direct gamete fish were stocked last year.

4. Twisp Weir Trapping Plan – Nexus with Bull Trout (Andrew Gingerich):

Andrew Gingerich said Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on May 26, 2015, notifying them the draft Twisp Weir Operations Plan is available for a 30-day review period, with edits and comments due to Gingerich by Friday, June 26, 2015. Gingerich said this plan is not a FERC requirement; rather, Douglas PUD agreed to develop this document after discussion with USFWS related to high numbers of bull trout encounters at the Twisp Weir in 2014. He said the draft plan, which is specific to encountering bull trout at the Twisp Weir, has already been sent to Steve Lewis for review.

Gingerich noted that one proposal included in the plan is to not operate the weir during nighttime hours, which is different than what has been done in the past. He explained that PIT-tag data from the Twisp River suggest adult bull trout migrate under the cover of darkness; so, this one operational change may significantly reduce bull trout encounters. He also noted that spring Chinook salmon broodstock collection for Douglas PUD's HCP obligation was accomplished via trapping at Wells Dam in 2015; so, trapping at the Twisp Weir will not be needed this year. He explained that each year, Douglas PUD conducts spring Chinook salmon broodstock collection at Wells Dam and also at the Twisp Weir. He said if adequate numbers are collected at the dam, which can be genetically assigned to the Twisp, than the Twisp Weir does not need to operate. He said bull trout encounters at the Twisp Weir most often occur each year in June and July while managing for HCP Plan Species. He said as of June 1, 2015, the weir gates have been put flush with the river and trap boxes have been opened, and no bull trout encounters are expected at that location this year.

5. Wells Reservoir Drawdown – Erosion Maintenance (Andrew Gingerich):

Andrew Gingerich said groins that were built in the 1960's to help flush sediment out of the Methow River are now past their useful life. As such, Douglas PUD is proposing to reconstruct them. He said this is a safety measure that needs to be addressed due to the flood risk to the City of Pateros should the area become full of silt. He said to conduct the work, the Wells Reservoir will need to be lowered to 776 feet above sea level, which is about mid-range (Wells Dam can operate as low as 771 feet above sea level, per FERC License No. 2149). He said all required permitting is already in place, and the work is now out for bid. John Ferguson asked about a timeline for construction, and asked if a 5-foot drawdown will affect the 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Evaluation Study. Gingerich said Douglas PUD plans to coordinate this drawdown with the lamprey habitat study, which will provide additional opportunities to sample during low-reservoir elevations.

VII. Next Meetings

1. **Upcoming meetings** (John Ferguson): John Ferguson asked if the Aquatic SWG prefers to meet in-person or via conference call for the Aquatic SWG meeting on July 8, 2015. Andrew Gingerich said Douglas PUD can accommodate either one. Bob Rose said he prefers via conference call, and indicated that the YN can distribute their lamprey presentation prior to the meeting. Patrick Verhey said WDFW has no preference; however, he may not be available next month, but Chad Jackson (WDFW) will be if he is not. Jason McLellan said the CCT also has no preference. Ferguson suggested, with respect to time and hearing no strong drivers to meet in-person, the Aquatic SWG should meet next month via conference call. Gingerich agreed this made sense, and added that preliminary white sturgeon data will become available later in the summer, which may warrant an in-person meeting. The Aquatic SWG meeting on July 8, 2015, will be held by conference call, and a date for the next in-person meeting will be discussed at that time.

Upcoming meetings are as follows: *July 8, 2015 (conference call); August 12, 2015 (TBD); and September 9, 2015 (TBD).*

List of Attachments

Attachment A – List of Attendees

Attachment A List of 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
RD Nelle	Technical Support	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Patrick Verhey	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jason McLellan	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Colville Confederated Tribes
Bob Rose	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Yakama Nation