

Final Conference Call Minutes



Aquatic Settlement Work Group

To: Aquatic SWG Parties **Date:** May 13, 2015
From: Michael Schiewe, Chairman (Anchor QEA, LLC)
Re: Final Minutes of the April 8, 2015 Aquatic SWG Conference Call

The Aquatic Settlement Work Group (SWG) met by conference call on Wednesday, April 8, 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. The Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT), Douglas PUD, and John Ferguson (new Aquatic SWG Chairman, effective May 2015) will discuss developing guidelines for hatchery rearing juvenile sturgeon. The path forward will be considered during an Aquatic SWG meeting in summer 2015 (Item VI-1).
2. Douglas PUD will update the Aquatic SWG when more is known regarding the feasibility of tagging white sturgeon from a work boat equipped with a sling, as opposed to tagging them from the shore, during white sturgeon monitoring and evaluation efforts in 2015 (Item VI-1).
3. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will provide comments on the draft 2014 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report to Douglas PUD after today's conference call. Once USFWS comments are resolved, Douglas PUD will provide the approved and revised final draft report to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-2).
4. Douglas PUD will provide the final 2014 Water Temperature Annual Report, including the revisions made per the Washington State Department of Ecology's (Ecology's) comments, to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-3). *(Note: Andrew Gingerich provided the final report, along with the email exchange between Ecology and Douglas PUD, to Geris after the Aquatic SWG meeting on April 8, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day.)*
5. Douglas PUD will provide the four remaining draft 2014 Aquatic Settlement Agreement (ASA) Management Plan Annual Reports (i.e., Water Quality, Pacific Lamprey, Resident Fish, and White Sturgeon) for review to Kristi Geris by the end of today for distribution

- to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-4). *(Note: Andrew Gingerich provided the draft reports for review after the Aquatic SWG meeting on April 8, 2015, as discussed, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day.)*
6. Douglas PUD will continue discussing the feasibility of combining all ASA Annual Reports and deadlines into one submittal (Item VI-4).
 7. Douglas PUD will provide the draft 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Study Plan for review to Kristi Geris by Friday, April 17, 2015, for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-8). *(Note: Chas Kyger provided the draft plan to Geris on Friday, April 24, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.)*
 8. Douglas PUD will provide photographs of the Wells Dam fishways and lamprey box, when available, to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-9). *(Note: Chas Kyger provided photographs of the Wells Dam fishways after the Aquatic SWG meeting on April 8, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day.)*

II. Summary of Decisions

1. The Aquatic SWG members present approved the 2014 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report, contingent on modifications and an agreement reached by Douglas PUD and USFWS (Item VI-2). *(Note: Jason McLellan provided the CCT's approval of the draft report via email on April 7, 2015.)*
2. The Aquatic SWG members present approved the 2014 Wells Project Water Temperature Annual Report, as revised (Item VI-3). *(Note: Jason McLellan provided the CCT's approval of the draft report via email on April 7, 2015.)*

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 April 8, 2015, notifying them the four remaining draft 2014 ASA Management Plan Annual Reports (i.e., Water Quality, Pacific Lamprey, Resident Fish, and White Sturgeon) are available for review, with edits and comments due to Andrew Gingerich by Friday, May 8, 2015. Douglas PUD will request approval of these draft reports during the Aquatic SWG meeting on May 13, 2015 (Item VI-4).
2. Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on April 10, 2015, notifying them the draft 2014 Aquatic Settlement Agreement Annual Report is available for a 30-day review period, with edits and comments due to Kristi Geris by Friday, May 6, 2015.
3. Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on April 24, 2015, notifying them the 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Evaluation Study Plan is available for a 30-day review period, with edits and comments due to Chas Kyger by Monday, May 25, 2015.

V. Documents Finalized

1. The final 2014 Water Temperature Annual Report was distributed to the Aquatic SWG by Kristi Geris on April 8, 2015 (Item VI-3).

VI. Summary of Discussions

1. **Welcome, Review Agenda, Meeting Minutes Approval, and Review of Action Items** (Mike Schiewe): Mike Schiewe welcomed the Aquatic SWG members (attendees are listed in Attachment A) and opened the meeting. Schiewe reviewed the agenda and asked for additions or other changes to the agenda. Chas Kyger added the following items: 1) draft 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Study Plan; and 2) 2015 Lamprey Study lamprey box installation update.

The revised draft March 11, 2015, conference call minutes were reviewed. Kristi Geris said all comments and revisions received from members of the Aquatic SWG were incorporated in the revised minutes, and there were no outstanding edits or questions to discuss. Aquatic SWG members present approved the March 11, 2015, conference call minutes, as revised.

Schiewe reviewed action items from the last Aquatic SWG conference call on March 11, 2015, and follow-up discussions were as follows (*Note: italicized item numbers below correspond to agenda items from the March 11, 2015, meeting*):

- *The CCT, Douglas PUD, and John Ferguson (new Aquatic SWG Chair; effective May 2015) will discuss developing guidelines for hatchery rearing juvenile white sturgeon. The path forward will be considered during an Aquatic SWG meeting in summer 2015 (Item VI-2).*
This action item will be carried forward.
- *Douglas PUD will provide an update on the current size range of white sturgeon at Wells Hatchery to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-6).* Andrew Gingerich provided an update to Geris on March 12, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day.
- *Douglas PUD will discuss with Wells Hatchery staff the ability to increase the water temperature in the larval-origin white sturgeon holding tanks from 14 to 16 degrees Celsius (°C) to increase fish growth to meet the target fish size at release (Item VI-6).*
Andrew Gingerich indicated, via email on March 12, 2015, the water temperature can and will be increased, as requested. Kristi Geris distributed this email to the Aquatic SWG the same day.
- *Douglas PUD will discuss internally the feasibility of tagging white sturgeon on the water in a boat equipped with a sling, as opposed to on the shore, during white sturgeon monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts in 2015 (Item VI-6).* Andrew Gingerich said these discussions are underway, and he will update the Aquatic SWG when he knows more.

- *Douglas PUD will provide a draft 2014 Bull Trout Incidental Take and Management Plan Annual Report to Kristi Geris by Friday, March 20, 2015, for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-7).*
Andrew Gingerich provided the draft report to Geris on March 16, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day. This will be discussed during today's conference call.
- *Douglas PUD will provide a draft 2014 Water Temperature Annual Report to Kristi Geris by end of day today, Wednesday, March 11, 2015, for distribution to the Aquatic SWG (Item VI-8).*
Andrew Gingerich provided the draft report to Geris on March 11, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day. This will be discussed during today's conference call.
- *Kristi Geris will copy Chris Coffin (Ecology) on all email correspondence that was formerly sent to Pat Irle (Item VI-9).*
Geris is now copying Coffin on emails.

2. DECISION: 2014 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report

(Andrew Gingerich): Andrew Gingerich said the 2014 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report summarizes activities conducted under the ASA Bull Trout Management Plan, including information on monitoring and addressing incidental take in the Wells Reservoir in 2014. Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on March 16, 2015, notifying them the draft report was available for review, with comments due to Douglas PUD prior to the Aquatic SWG meeting on April 8, 2015. Gingerich said that no comments were received on the draft report. He indicated Douglas PUD needs to submit this report to the USFWS by April 15, 2015, as required by their Bull Trout Biological Opinion. The final report is due to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) by May 31, 2015.

Steve Lewis said USFWS has reviewed the draft report and will provide comments to Douglas PUD after today's conference call. He said USFWS comments mostly address formatting and the overall flow of the document. Gingerich said, regarding format, as has been done in the past, the report is formatted to follow the management plan as closely as possible. Lewis said that should be fine; however, there are still some areas he feels could be better organized and streamlined. He added, however, USFWS' comments should not substantially change the content of the document.

The Aquatic SWG members present approved the 2014 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report, contingent on modifications and an agreement reached by Douglas PUD and USFWS. Once USFWS comments are resolved, Douglas PUD will provide the approved and revised final draft report to Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG. *(Note: Jason McLellan provided the CCT's approval of the draft report via email on April 7, 2015.)*

John Ferguson asked about the schedule for developing the Twisp Weir Operations Plan, as noted in Objective 6 in the Executive Summary of the 2014 Bull Trout Management Plan and Incidental Take Annual Report. Gingerich recalled Douglas PUD operates the Twisp Weir to manage for Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Plan Species, and bull trout encounters at the weir are also monitored under the ASA Bull Trout Management Plan. He said a large number of bull trout were encountered at the Twisp Weir last year, so Douglas PUD initiated discussions with USFWS to modify Twisp Weir trapping operations to limit the number of fish encountered in future years. He added Douglas PUD and USFWS met a few months ago to further discuss Twisp Weir trapping operations, and it was suggested an operations plan be developed that identifies ways to minimize bull trout encounters at the Twisp Weir. He said the ASA Bull Trout Management Plan addresses encounters with bull trout under HCP or hatchery actions, while Article 402 of Douglas PUD's FERC License Order 2149-52 requires Douglas PUD to identify how bull trout are enumerated and studied during those actions. He recalled that in late 2013, the Aquatic SWG approved a Bull Trout Stranding, Entrapment, and Take Study Plan, which was more specific to the weir itself. He said a more comprehensive plan is being drafted for review. The plan may be available by May 2015.

Ferguson asked when planning will begin for the Bull Trout Passage Evaluation Study scheduled for 2017. Gingerich recalled Douglas PUD was planning to implement a Passage Evaluation Study at the Twisp Weir in 2013; however, following consultation with USFWS and the Aquatic SWG, Douglas PUD decided to postpone the study for 4 years (until Year 5 of the license term) to combine the study with a Bull Trout Passage Evaluation Study scheduled to take place at Wells Dam during Year Five of the license term. He added FERC approved deferring the study as requested. He said a study plan had already been developed and approved by the Aquatic SWG. He noted, however, that the plan will need to be updated accordingly, which he plans to begin addressing in 2016. He also noted Douglas PUD will begin contracting and permitting for this study in 2016.

3. DECISION: 2014 Water Temperature Annual Report (Andrew Gingerich):

Andrew Gingerich said Kristi Geris sent an email to the Aquatic SWG on March 11, 2015, notifying them the draft 2014 Wells Project Water Temperature Annual Report was available for review, with comments due to Douglas PUD by Friday, April 3, 2015. Gingerich said the only comment received was from Ecology requesting clarification of a sentence, which was addressed. He noted Douglas PUD is required by their Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification and FERC License Order 2149-52 to provide Ecology and FERC with a Water Temperature Report by April 30, 2015. He said the report describes real-time water temperature monitoring at key input locations around the Wells Project, including at the Chief Joseph Dam tailrace, Okanogan River boundary, Methow River boundary, and Wells Dam forebay and tailrace. He noted these data are

also posted on Douglas PUD's website, as well as on the U.S. Geological Survey's and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' websites.

Charlie McKinney said Ecology agrees Douglas PUD adequately addressed their comment. He noted that Ecology's 401 Water Quality Certification has fairly extensive water quality-monitoring requirements, particularly for the Wells Project because there are three major rivers emptying in the Wells Pool. He said Douglas PUD has been doing a good job of monitoring all locations. The Aquatic SWG members present approved the 2014 Wells Project Water Temperature Annual Report, as revised. *(Note: Jason McLellan provided the CCT's approval of the draft report via email on April 7, 2015.)*

Douglas PUD will provide the final 2014 Water Temperature Annual Report, including the revisions addressing Ecology's comments, to Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG. *(Note: Gingerich provided the final report, along with the email exchange between Ecology and Douglas PUD, to Geris after the Aquatic SWG meeting on April 8, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day.)*

- 4. Draft Aquatic Settlement Agreement Management Plan Annual Reports for Review**
(Andrew Gingerich): Andrew Gingerich said Douglas PUD will provide the four remaining draft 2014 ASA Management Plan Annual Reports (i.e., Water Quality, Pacific Lamprey, Resident Fish, and White Sturgeon) for review to Kristi Geris by the end of today for distribution to the Aquatic SWG. He said the final and approved reports are due to FERC by May 31, 2015. *(Note: Gingerich provided the draft reports for review after the Aquatic SWG meeting on April 8, 2015, as discussed, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day.)*

Steve Lewis asked about the difference between information reported in the ASA Management Plan Annual Reports and the ASA Annual Report. Gingerich said the information should largely be consistent. He further explained that Douglas PUD is required to file with FERC an ASA Annual Report and individual ASA Management Plan Annual Reports. He explained the ASA Management Plan Annual Reports are specific to that resource; whereas, the Anchor QEA-developed ASA Annual Report addresses all management areas. He added the ASA Annual Report also focuses on the interactions of the Aquatic SWG in implementing the ASA Management Plans. He acknowledged this is a lot to review and submit to FERC by May, and he said Douglas PUD has considered asking FERC for permission to combine all ASA Annual Reports and deadlines into one submittal. Lewis agreed combining all reports and deadlines may be a good idea. Gingerich said Douglas PUD will file this year's respective annual reports as planned, but agreed to draft a letter to FERC requesting permission to combine all ASA Annual Reports and deadlines into one submittal in future years. He added he does not foresee this being an issue with FERC, as it is not an operational change. Patrick Verhey also suggested establishing a longer review period than 30 days because a single document

will be larger. John Ferguson suggested Douglas PUD develop a proposed schedule and template for the new combined report. Gingerich said he recommends using Anchor QEA's annual report format because it is comprehensive. He added, because the ASA Management Plan Annual Reports largely use the ASA Management Plan template, a lot of the background information is redundant and could be eliminated in a new reporting format. Gingerich said Douglas PUD will discuss internally the feasibility of combining all ASA Annual Reports and deadlines into one submittal.

5. **2015 Bypass Season** (Andrew Gingerich): Andrew Gingerich said tonight at midnight (April 9, 2015, at 0000 hours), bypass operations at the Wells Project will begin. He said bypass operations will be consistent with the Aquatic SWG-approved 2015 Gas Abatement Plan and Bypass Operating Plan and be in place through August 19, 2015 for salmonid passage.
6. **Water Forecast 2015 Freshet** (Andrew Gingerich): Andrew Gingerich recalled a question that Patrick Verhey asked during last month's Aquatic SWG meeting on March 11, 2015, regarding the water forecast for the Wells Project in 2015. Gingerich said he wanted to address his question more thoroughly, so he provided the water forecast 2015 freshet summary (Attachment B) to Kristi Geris on April 7, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day.

Gingerich summarized, as noted in Attachment B, year-to-date river flow past Wells Dam has been higher than average due to the following factors: 1) mild temperatures resulting in precipitation falling as rain versus snow; and 2) Grand Coulee Dam drafting early to accommodate needed drum gate maintenance. He said runoff has been well above average, resulting in freshet flow close to or slightly below average, which may be different than what some were expecting. He explained most water in the Wells Reservoir originates from snowpack in British Columbia, Canada. He noted this is not the case for reservoirs located west of the Cascades, and in Oregon and the lower Snake River, which experienced below average snowpack. He said Figures 1 through 3 in Attachment B depict this information.

Charlie McKinney asked if any problems have been experienced with juvenile fish passage at Wells Dam during a low-water year. Gingerich said, since he has been with Douglas PUD, there has not been a low-water year that has affected fish passage. He noted the Wells HCP and ASA Bypass Operating Plan are written to address all flow conditions. He said, for example, turbine units cannot be online, unless the adjacent bypass is operating, and a minimum amount of water is needed to run the bypass. He added he believes there would need to be fairly extreme conditions to affect bypass operations.

7. White Sturgeon (Andrew Gingerich):

Condition Update

Andrew Gingerich said there are currently 5,560 white sturgeon on station at Wells Hatchery, including 500 Marion Drain direct gamete-origin fish. He said in the next couple of weeks, the program will be reduced to 5,100 fish. He said, during the past month, on average, fish sizes have increased by 15 grams. He said Wells Hatchery Staff are expecting fish growth to increase even more with reduced densities and increased water temperatures. He said Douglas PUD is expecting that fish sizes will be similar to those stocked last year. He said overall fish condition is good, noting only one fish died in the past 30 days. He said the current average fish size is 83 grams, and he noted there is a wide range of average fish sizes (a 39-gram average in one tank and a 127-gram average in another).

Tag and Release Plans

Gingerich said sturgeon tagging will occur at the end of this month. He said 5,000 fish will be tagged, including 50 acoustically tagged fish that will be released during the first week of June 2015. He said, during the last week of May 2015, students from Bridgeport High School will participate in the release of about 30 white sturgeon in the Wells Reservoir. He recalled Douglas PUD carried out the same outreach activity in coordination with WDFW last year.

8. Draft 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Study Plan (Chas Kyger): Chas Kyger said Douglas PUD is drafting a study plan to identify and quantify potential juvenile lamprey habitat in the Wells Project. He said the plan will include documenting presence or absence of lamprey in specific areas of the Wells Project. He said Douglas PUD will provide the draft 2015 Juvenile Lamprey Habitat Study Plan for review to Kristi Geris by Friday, April 17, 2015, for distribution to the Aquatic SWG. He added Douglas PUD plans to conduct monitoring work from July through October 2015. *(Note: Kyger provided the draft plan to Geris on Friday, April 24, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.)*

9. 2015 Lamprey Study – Lamprey Box Installation Update (Chas Kyger): According to Chas Kyger, Douglas PUD initially proposed to reopen the low-level entrances of the Wells Dam fishways to improve lamprey passage. He recalled there was concern expressed by the National Marine Fisheries Service with regard to potential impacts on salmonid passage, which led to designing a lamprey box for installation in the entrances to exclude salmon from the entrance while maintaining selected velocities. He said the lamprey boxes were modeled after a similar design that was installed at McNary Dam. He added, since September 2014, Douglas PUD engineering staff have been working on the design and fabrication of the units; however, there have been a series of unavoidable delays, which prevented completion and installation. He explained assembling the boxes was taking longer than anticipated, and completion is not

expected until April 10, 2015. He said, in order to install the lamprey boxes, the winter maintenance outage at Wells Dam would have needed to be extended, and the Wells HCP Coordinating Committee was not willing to approve such an extension. He said their reluctance was based on the early timing of this year's spring Chinook salmon run, with more than 480 fish passing over Bonneville Dam already (about 1 month earlier than normal). Also, he said steelhead that overwintered in the mainstem Columbia River typically start moving in April, and Douglas PUD expects they may move earlier this year due to warmer water temperatures. All these factors resulted in a decision to defer installation of the lamprey boxes until the 2015/2016 maintenance period.

Patrick Verhey asked if it would be possible to see the fishway dewatered, where the lamprey boxes will be installed, to better understand how lamprey may interact with the box and the surrounding area. Andrew Gingerich said this can be arranged during next year's annual winter maintenance period, and Kyger added dam engineers may have photographs of the area they can share. Verhey said any photographs of the actual lamprey boxes would also be helpful. Kyger said that Douglas PUD expects to receive the completed boxes by Friday, April 10, 2015, and that he will provide photographs of the Wells Dam fishways and lamprey boxes, when available, to Kristi Geris for distribution to the Aquatic SWG. *(Note: Kyger provided photographs of the Wells Dam fishways after the Aquatic SWG meeting on April 8, 2015, which Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG the same day.)*

Kyger recalled that via the low-level entrance, fish can access the c-channel that runs across the face of the dam, which historically has been a deep-water entrance for salmon. He said attraction water guides fish through this lower channel beneath the floor of the collection gallery and terminates below the entrance to Weir 1. He said this route essentially bypasses the main entrance and auxiliary water supply system, which was an area that appeared to cause issues with lamprey passage during the 2013 Lamprey Study.

VII. Next Meetings

1. **Mike Schiewe's Retirement** (All): Mike Schiewe thanked the Aquatic SWG for their many successful years of collaboration and wished them many more. He said he was confident John Ferguson, the new Aquatic SWG Chairman, will do an outstanding job. Aquatic SWG members thanked Schiewe for his many years of contributions and leadership to the Aquatic SWG.
2. **Upcoming meetings** (Mike Schiewe): Upcoming meetings are as follows: **May 13, 2015 (conference call); June 10, 2015 (TBD); and July 8, 2015 (TBD).**

List of Attachments

Attachment A – List of Attendees

Attachment B – Water Forecast 2015 Freshet Summary

Attachment A List of Attendees

Name	Role	Organization
Mike Schiewe	Aquatic SWG Chairman	Anchor QEA, LLC
John Ferguson	Aquatic SWG Chairman (May 2015)	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
Bob Rose	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Yakama Nation
Chris Coffin	Observer	Washington State Department of Ecology
Charlie McKinney	Aquatic SWG Policy Representative	Washington State Department of Ecology
Steve Lewis	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Patrick Verhey	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife