



# Conference Call Minutes

## Aquatic Settlement Work Group

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**To:** Aquatic SWG Parties

**Date:** August 11, 2021

**From:** John Ferguson, Chair, Anchor QEA, LLC

**Re:** Final Minutes of the July 14, 2021, Aquatic SWG Conference Call

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The Aquatic Settlement Work Group (SWG) met by conference call on Wednesday, July 14, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. Attendees are listed in Attachment A of these conference call minutes.

### I. Summary of Action Items

1. Douglas PUD will develop a draft adult Pacific Lamprey study plan for implementation in 2022 that considers potential methodologies, release locations, and sample size requirements, for discussion in fall 2021 (Item VI-1).
2. The Yakama Nation (YN) will finalize environmental DNA (eDNA) and bile acids sampling protocols for discussion during the Aquatic SWG conference call on August 11, 2021 (Item VI-1).
3. Aquatic SWG members will consider possible objectives for a Bull Trout passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag study for implementation in 2022, for discussion in October 2021 (Item VI-3).
4. Douglas PUD will add Wells Fish Hatchery White Sturgeon stocking considerations to a future Aquatic SWG meeting agenda after a technical subgroup is able to further discuss this topic (Item VI-6).
5. The Aquatic SWG meeting on August 11, 2021, 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. Aquatic SWG members present agreed to forego conducting a Pacific Lamprey pilot PIT tag study in 2021 (Item VI-7). *(Note: Patrick Verhey indicated that Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife [WDFW] does not support conducting such a study in 2021, via email on July 8, 2021.)*

## IV. Review Items

1. There are no items that are currently available for review.

## V. Documents Finalized

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

## 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 listed in Attachment A). Ferguson asked for any additions or changes to the agenda. No additions or changes were requested.

The revised draft June 9, 2021, conference call minutes were reviewed. Kristi Geris said edits and comments received from members of the Aquatic SWG were incorporated into the revised minutes. Aquatic SWG members present approved the June 9, 2021, conference call minutes, as revised. *(Note: Patrick Verhey and Ralph Lampman provided WDFW and YN approval, respectively, of the revised minutes via email on July 7, 2021, and Andrew Gingerich provided Douglas PUD approval of the revised minutes via email on July 8, 2021.)*

Action items from the Aquatic SWG conference call on June 9, 2021, are as follows (Note: the following italicized item numbers correspond to agenda items from the June 9, 2021, meeting):

- *Douglas PUD will develop a draft adult Pacific Lamprey study plan for implementation in 2022 that considers potential methodologies, release locations, and sample size requirements, for discussion in fall 2021 (Item VI-1).*

This action item will be carried forward.

- *Douglas PUD will distribute a Doodle Poll to convene a technical subgroup to discuss Wells Project White Sturgeon hook size to be used in 2021 monitoring and evaluation (M&E) sampling and will report back to the Aquatic SWG during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 14, 2021 (Item VI-2).*

A subgroup consisting of Douglas PUD, the Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT), and WDFW convened via WebEx on June 14, 2021, which Douglas PUD will review during today's Aquatic SWG conference call.

- *Douglas PUD will distribute the PIT Tag Information System (PTAGIS) query for Bull Trout detections that was shared during today's Bull Trout PIT Tag Study discussion, for*

*consideration in developing study objectives, to be discussed further during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 14, 2021 (Item VI-5).*

Andrew Gingerich provided these data following the Aquatic SWG conference call on June 9, 2021, which Kristi Geris distributed to the Aquatic SWG that same day.

- *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will distribute a recent Bull Trout PIT Tag Study design implemented in the Rocky Reach Project (Item VI-5).*

Steve Lewis distributed the draft study plan outline, *Chelan PUD 2018 Bull Trout Project Interactions and Genetics Analysis Study Plan*, to the Aquatic SWG on June 25, 2021.

- *Douglas PUD will distribute a Doodle Poll to convene a technical subgroup to discuss Wells Fish Hatchery White Sturgeon stocking considerations and will report back to the Aquatic SWG during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 14, 2021 (Item VI-7).*

Considering current workloads, Douglas PUD plans to propose moving this discussion to late summer or fall 2021, which will be further discussed during today's Aquatic SWG conference call.

- *The YN will finalize eDNA and bile acids sampling protocols for discussion during the Aquatic SWG conference call on July 14, 2021 (Item VI 8).*

Ralph Lampman was unable to attend today's conference call; therefore, this action item will be carried forward.

- *Anchor QEA, LLC, will add the Douglas PUD Pacific Lamprey Pilot PIT Tag Study in 2021 discussion to the agenda for the Aquatic SWG Pacific Lamprey Translocation Coordination conference call with the Joint Fisheries Parties (JFP) on July 7, 2021 (Item VI-9).*

This topic was added to the agenda, as discussed.

- *Anchor QEA will add a discussion about the proportion of Pacific Lamprey to be translocated in 2021 relative to the total run size at Priest Rapids Dam to the agenda for the Aquatic SWG Pacific Lamprey Translocation Coordination conference call with the JFP on July 7, 2021 (Item VI-10).*

This topic was added to the agenda, as discussed.

- *An Aquatic SWG Pacific Lamprey Translocation Coordination conference call with the JFP will be held on July 7, 2021, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., by conference call (Item VII-1).*

This call took place, as planned.

## **2. Coronavirus Disease 2019 Updates (John Ferguson):**

John Ferguson asked if Aquatic SWG members had any new updates to share regarding impacts of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Aquatic SWG-related M&E activities.

Laura Heironimus said WDFW updated their COVID-19 protocols where WDFW staff who verify their vaccination status can attend in-person meetings without wearing a mask.

Ferguson asked if this is in effect right now. Heironimus said yes, for those who are vaccinated.

Breean Zimmerman said Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) will have a soft opening of Ecology offices on August 16, 2021. At that time, staff will be allowed to come into the offices but will be encouraged to do so only as needed. Most staff will continue working from home. Ecology offices will open to the public in September 2021. Ferguson asked if these arrangements will be in place for the foreseeable future, and Zimmerman said yes.

The Aquatic SWG had no other new COVID-19 updates to announce.

### **3. Bull Trout Passive Integrated Transponder Tag Study (Chas Kyger):**

Chas Kyger said Steve Lewis distributed the draft study plan outline, *Chelan PUD 2018 Bull Trout Project Interactions and Genetics Analysis Study Plan*, to the Aquatic SWG on June 25, 2021. Kyger said Andrew Gingerich spoke with Steve Hemstrom (Chelan PUD) who indicated the study was conducted and that the final study report is expected to be available soon.

Kyger said Douglas PUD is supportive of conducting a similar study that uses PIT tags and reviews detection histories on PIT arrays. However, Douglas PUD is not comfortable calling such a study a "passage and survival" study because there is no way to evaluate downstream survival and passage using PIT tags. Douglas PUD wants to be clear about the objectives and limitations of PIT tag technology. A PIT tag study is not promising results on passage and survival; rather, it is to learn more about Bull Trout life history. Douglas PUD suggests the next step would be for the Aquatic SWG to develop study objectives to this end.

John Ferguson asked if this proposed PIT tag study is for implementation in 2022. Kyger said yes, this year's Bull Trout run at Wells Dam is almost finished and Douglas PUD is not collecting spring Chinook salmon broodstock at the trap, so there has not been an opportunity to tag incidentally caught Bull Trout. Also, there were only a few fish this year to begin with, so the sample size would have been small anyway.

Ferguson asked if Aquatic SWG members present had questions or comments. None were shared. He said PIT tag studies do not require a lot of lead time. Ferguson asked, for a field study in 2022, does Douglas PUD want to start discussing a study plan in October 2021? Kyger said he thinks this is a good plan. He suggested, in the meantime, the Aquatic SWG think about specific objectives and what members hope to learn about Bull Trout behavior and life history through PIT detection histories. Aquatic SWG members will consider possible objectives for a Bull Trout PIT tag study for implementation in 2022, for discussion in October 2021.

Jason McLellan announced that he just joined the conference call. Ferguson provided an overview of this Bull Trout topic and discussions. McLellan said he has no further comments.

**4. Brood Year 2021 White Sturgeon Larvae Collection (Jason McLellan):**

Jason McLellan said the CCT have been collecting larvae since June 22, 2021, continuously every night. To date a total of more than 13,000 fish have been collected, of which more than 5,200 have been delivered to Wells Fish Hatchery to rear for Douglas PUD's program in the Wells Reservoir and Chelan PUD's program in the Rocky Reach Reservoir. Based on survival rates of larvae at Wells Fish Hatchery over the past two years and the number of larvae delivered to date, there should be enough larvae on site to meet the stocking targets for both programs. The CCT will continue larvae collection for other supplementation programs.

**5. Wells Project White Sturgeon Monitoring and Evaluation (Chas Kyger):**

Chas Kyger said Douglas PUD convened a technical subgroup to discuss Wells Project White Sturgeon M&E sampling in 2021. This subgroup agreed to two changes from past years. First, the subgroup agreed to use a mix of gear types, and specifically, hook sizes. Starting this year, Douglas PUD will fish 12 lines per day with six lines equipped with 2- and 4-aught (2/0 and 4/0) hooks to target smaller juvenile White Sturgeon. The other six lines will be equipped with 14/0, 16/0, 18/0, and 20/0 hooks to target larger adult White Sturgeon. Douglas PUD may end up fishing these two types of gear simultaneously. Second, the subgroup agreed that instead of the usual separate sessions of effort—one in July and in September for juveniles and one in August for adults—this year, these efforts will be combined into one sampling session, starting July 25, 2021, extending continuously for 50 days, and ending September 30, 2021. Dave Robichaud (LGL Limited) will assess how this combined effort translates into precision for survival estimates. If the effort needs to be adjusted, Douglas PUD will further discuss this with the Aquatic SWG. The same bait that has been used in the past—pickled squid—will be used this year. There will also be the same allocation of effort in terms of the different zones fished. The only changes are the types of gear and the continuous sampling period.

**6. Wells Fish Hatchery White Sturgeon Stocking Considerations (Chas Kyger):**

Chas Kyger said there are plans to convene a technical subgroup to discuss this topic; however, this meeting keeps getting pushed out because everyone is busy with field work. Douglas PUD has discussed this with Dave Robichaud, who is reviewing statistics from previous M&E data to determine how these statistics can be used when the subgroup can meet.

John Ferguson asked if anything might be ready before the Aquatic SWG conference call on August 11, 2021, and Kyger said he doubts it. Ferguson suggested that Douglas PUD add

Wells Fish Hatchery White Sturgeon stocking considerations to a future Aquatic SWG meeting agenda after a technical subgroup is able to further discuss this topic.

## **7. Pacific Lamprey Pilot Passive Integrated Transponder Tag Study in 2021 (Chas Kyger):**

John Ferguson said the Aquatic SWG has been discussing this for a couple of months now. He said Patrick Verhey indicated that WDFW does not support a Pacific Lamprey PIT tag study for implementation in 2021, via an email on July 8, 2021. He said in general, most Aquatic SWG members articulated a preference to focus on translocation in 2021, including Douglas PUD, RD Nelle (USFWS), and now Verhey. The only member really pushing for a pilot study in 2021 is Ralph Lampman, and he is not in attendance today. Ferguson said he does not foresee there being unanimous agreement to proceed with a pilot study this year and, from the Chair's perspective, it seems a Pacific Lamprey study is on hold this year to be picked up next year.

Chas Kyger agreed with Ferguson's summation. He said Douglas PUD does not feel strongly one way or another. There could be some advantages to a pilot study this year but, at the same time, Douglas PUD recognizes a pilot study this year may be sacrificing getting more fish into the tributaries to increase attraction cues to help future studies. It seems the Aquatic SWG is in general agreement to focus on translocation this year, and to come to an agreement on a study plan for next year, for a more full-blown effort. Douglas PUD supports this outcome to focus on translocation this final year of the current translocation Statement of Agreement<sup>1</sup>.

Ferguson asked if Aquatic SWG members present had questions or comments. None were shared. Therefore, Aquatic SWG members present agreed to forego conducting a Pacific Lamprey pilot PIT tag study in 2021. *(Note: Verhey indicated that WDFW does not support conducting such a study in 2021, via email on July 8, 2021.)*

## **8. Aquatic SWG Pacific Lamprey Translocation Coordination with the Joint Fisheries Parties (John Ferguson):**

John Ferguson said the Aquatic SWG participated in a joint Pacific Lamprey translocation coordination meeting with the Priest Rapids Fish Forum and Rocky Reach Fish Forum, which was held by conference call on Wednesday, July 7, 2021. Ferguson said from his perspective, the meeting objectives were reached. Attendees indicated that the meeting was a good use of time, and the forums ought to convene a similar coordination meeting each year. There

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<sup>1</sup> To translocate adult Pacific Lamprey from Priest Rapids Dam to areas within or upstream of the Wells Project and postpone passage evaluations, approved by the Aquatic SWG on June 13, 2018, and distributed on June 14, 2018.

are plans to convene another meeting next July 2022. For this year, Ralph Lampman provided estimates of Pacific Lamprey numbers passing Priest Rapids Dam based on counts at Bonneville Dam. This is not the biggest year in terms of numbers, but it appears better compared to last year. Grant PUD will conduct 8 weeks of sampling. The forums were supportive of a July 19, 2021, start date for trapping. There was a lot of discussion led by RD Nelle about what proportion is acceptable to translocate above Wells Dam. No specific numbers were identified, but the forums were supportive of translocating 20% of the total daily counts at Priest Rapids Dam above Wells Dam. Lampman offered to augment Mid-Columbia translocation efforts with 400 fish from the lower river. The forums were supportive of Grant PUD collecting the first 4 weeks of trapping for the Douglas PUD program, similar to past years. After 4 weeks, this will be nearing the next Aquatic SWG monthly meeting and there will be a clearer idea of run size and translocation numbers to date. At that time, Douglas PUD and Grant PUD will discuss whether the second 4-week period of fish collection will be handed off to Douglas PUD at Kirby Billingsley Hydro Park in Wenatchee, Washington, to be translocated farther upstream above Wells Dam.

Ferguson asked if Douglas PUD has any further updates since this coordination call. Chas Kyger clarified that the traps will be deployed on Monday, July 19, 2021, and Douglas PUD plans to pick up the first batch of fish on Thursday, July 22, 2021. He recalled that the Statement of Agreement<sup>1</sup> stipulates that 25% of the translocated fish be released in the Okanogan River basin. Douglas PUD has been in contact with the CCT about taking a proportion of these fish to release in Okanogan River tributaries. The CCT are aware collection will start next week. However, everyone is anticipating that numbers might be low considering the run is just arriving in the Mid-Columbia. The CCT will decide 1 or 2 days ahead of time whether crews will come down to collect fish for the Okanogan River. If numbers are low, the CCT might wait and come down later when there are more fish to hand off.

## **VII. Administration**

### **1. Upcoming Meetings (John Ferguson):**

The Aquatic SWG meeting on August 11, 2021, will be held by conference call.

Other upcoming meetings include September 8 and October 13, 2021 (location to be determined).

## List of Attachments

Attachment A List of Attendees



**Attachment A - Attendees**

<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
Chas Kyger	Aquatic SWG Technical Alternate	Douglas PUD
RD Nelle	Aquatic SWG Technical Support	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Breean Zimmerman	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Washington State Department of Ecology
Laura Heironimus	Aquatic SWG Technical Alternate	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jason McLellan†	Aquatic SWG Technical Representative	Colville Confederated Tribes

Notes:

† Joined conference call at approximately 10:15 a.m. (was not present during the approval of the June 9, 2021, conference call minutes).