

Fish Passage Center Oversight Board Meeting Notes

June 8, 2005

1. Greetings and Introductions.

FPCOB Chair Larry Cassidy welcomed everyone to today's meeting, led a review of today's agenda and a round of introductions. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at this meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these minutes should contact JoAnn Black-Burrell at 360/

2. Quarterly Report Summary.

In the creation of the 2000 Fish and Wildlife Plan, there was a significant effort to take the FPC budget out of the Council's F&W plan budget, said Cassidy. We created this board to oversee that budget, and the board has attracted broad regional support, Cassidy said. This group enjoys support from states, tribes, regional and federal entities. It has taken some time for us to become a cohesive group; there were, initially some questions as to whether this is a cohesive group. In late summer, Judi Danielson decided to create a Council subcommittee to deal with FPC-related matters. I decided to allow the FPCOB to float until I heard the outcome of that group's deliberations. This is the first meeting we've had for several months, he said.

The purpose of today's meeting is to introduce Joan Dukes; technically, I would suggest that we transfer the leadership of this group to Joan. There are issues regarding the FPC's research outputs; my feeling is, show me what you don't like, and I will take that to the scientific committee, he said. As a board, we're not qualified to say what information should be collated and disseminated, he said – there is another scientific board that makes those determinations. The other change we made was to put the review of Michelle DeHart's performance on a more formal annual basis with the CBFWA chair, he said.

I have never really objected to the existence of FPCOB, said Rob Lothrop; it is the role of the board that we had questions about. FPAC meets weekly to deal with management issues, observed Rod Sando; they are a big part of what happens the river. I would add that the ISRP and ISAB reviews all of our analyses, said Michelle DeHart.

So there is the oversight board, and there are the two science committees, observed another participant. I think it is well understood that this is the single most-

observed organization in the entire system, said Rob Sando.

There has been an ongoing battle about the FPC and whether it presents balanced views, said Cassidy. The concern is that the FPC data and studies are not peer-reviewed. My feeling is that the FPC is valuable because of its broad representation – it includes states, tribes and industry. But we need a better understanding of what you're doing.

You received the quarterly report on March 31, said DeHart; it is part of our contractual requirement that we produce this, The draft 2004 smolt monitoring program report will be available next week. Bonneville asked us to summarize any problems we had; none were identified. We had to put a lot of effort into obtaining permits, but we did get them, and are now moving on. The format of these reports is determined by Bonneville; if you have any questions, please call me directly, she said.

3. NWPPCC Budget Submittal for 2006.

May 20 was the deadline for funding of 2006 projects, said DeHart; Council staff asked us to include everything we're planning to do next year. If there were increases, we had to explain why. We also did a submittal for the FPC and the comparative Smolt Survival Study. All of these projects are above the funding line by about \$40,000. Our plan is to continue to work with BPA and the tribes, she said. My suggestion is that you put this in the form of a line-item, said Cassidy - it's in your best interest to lay out a budget.

To be clear, said one FPC participant, we have laid out a flat-line budget, and asked our contractors to explain what they're planning to do. How will this process work? asked another participant – it seems as though you are balancing the budget on the backs of the researchers, We have no expectation that we can increase our budget, said the FPC participant.

Your infrastructure is dying, and the ability of people to carry out the tasks you're setting is deteriorating, said Sando. We have made what I think is a pretty good case to Bonneville, Cassidy replied.

Another option is for the FPC to go outside BPA for funding, Lothrop observed – there may be an opportunity to diversify somewhat, in terms of funding. I have talked to a number of agencies about funding for FPC, said Sando, and they are reluctant to give funding to government-supported organizations.

The issue here is that we had thought that, by carrying tags over from last year, we would be saving BPA money, said DeHart – however, that was not BPA's view. That has happened a couple of years in a row, and our budget has actually been reduced by these opportunistic savings. I've gone to meetings with the Council, BPA and others where whole projects were left out, she said.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to budgetary issues. Sando noted that he is troubled by the a hoc budgetary process, and approach to management policy, that seems to hold sway, currently, Management policy isn't rocket science, he said.

4. Highlights of Spring Outmigration To Date.

DeHart said that there are several interesting facets to the 2005 spring outmigration. For one thing, there has been forced spill at some of the Lower Snake projects. Also, despite the pre-season predictions of a very poor 2005 water year, it has been necessary to increase Libby outflow in the last day or so because of rising inflows. Flows have been so high that there have been observations of dead steelhead smolts below Little Goose. There have been a number of mistakes made this spring, including researcher mistakes at Little Goose. The Fish Passage Center will be sending out a memo detailing the problems that have occurred, she said, including the accidental release of a barge-load of fish in the Bonneville forebay in late April. The thing that caught my attention is that so many of these events happened so close together, she said.

Last week, there was an incident where 1,200 fish per day were being killed and completely descaled at Lower Granite, said DeHart – initially, the Corps was very reluctant to reduce load at Lower Granite to keep that from happening, but eventually, they agreed. Today they again increased load at Lower Granite, and when mortality increased, they again had to reduce load. This is the day-to-day stuff we need to discuss, either through TMT or this body, said DeHart.

Because of the lack of spill at The Dalles due to the spill gate cable problems, there was seven days of additional daytime spill at John Day, earlier this spring, said DeHart. The unexpected additional flow caused by the late-spring precipitation has also added to the trash problems at the mainstem projects, she added. While trash raking is ongoing, the units have to be turned off while that occurs.

In response to a question, DeHart said FPC does calculate migration timing and survival on an annual basis. We have transported a large percentage of the run, she said – probably 65% of the spring migrants in 2005. In response to another question, DeHart said the FPC will provide its report on the 2005 outmigration as soon as possible.

5. Other.

It was agreed that Joan Dukes will take over as FPCOB chair from Cassidy, effective immediately. It was further agreed that FPC staff will develop a memo laying out the FY'06 Fish Passage Center budget for FPCOB and Council review.

6. Next FPCOB Meeting Date.

No specific date was identified for the next Fish Passage Center Oversight Board meeting at today's meeting; it will likely occur in September or October. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, NWPPCC contractor.