

State, Federal and Tribal Fishery Agencies Joint Technical Staff Memo

October 10, 2007

Steve Brown
Grant County Public Utility District
PO Box 878
Ephrata, WA 98823

Dawn Woodward
Grant County Public Utility District
PO Box 878
Ephrata, WA 98823

Dear Steve and Dawn,

The Fish Passage Advisory Committee members and the US v OR Technical Advisory Committee, comprising technical staffs of the below fisheries agencies, are concerned with adult fish counts at both Priest Rapids and Wanapum Dams. There are discrepancies between the number of jack salmon counted at Grant PUD projects and other upper Columbia River projects. Upon investigating this issue we have learned that at both GCPUD projects the count tunnels through which fish pass are 30 inches or greater in dimensional depth, which makes it very difficult to gauge the length of a fish passing through the tunnel. Although total fish counts across GC PUD dams seem to be similar to Rock Island Dam, the adult/jack ratio is different.

Dam counts are used by the fishery managers to track the status of the fish runs through their adult migration, and an accurate accounting of adults versus jacks is necessary to provide confidence in management decisions. Adult dam counts are crucial in reconstructing stock-specific runs and adult and jack counts are necessary for forecasting future runs. Priest Rapids Dam is one of the major counting stations for fishery management on the Columbia River. It is the first dam upstream from the mouth of the Snake River and is used to separate the runs into Upper Columbia and Snake River components. Spring Chinook and steelhead migrating above Priest Rapids Dam are listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as endangered. Under the *U.S. v Oregon* fishery management agreements, Priest Rapids Dam is used in determining the abundance of spring Chinook and steelhead under which certain fisheries can occur, and is used as the measurement of the escapement goal for upper Columbia summer Chinook.

We have been informed that Grant County employees have already been investigating this issue and have preliminarily developed several possible solutions. The fisheries agencies and tribes appreciate the work already conducted by Grant County employees concerning this issue. We recommend that Grant County work with the Agencies and Tribes to develop a solution to the fish counting stations as soon as possible, preferably over the winter of 2007/2008, so as to ensure that adult and jack counts are as accurate as possible at Grant PUD Dams during the 2008 adult migration and in years to follow.

We would like to thank Grant County PUD for all the attention allotted to your adult fishways; your fishways have been very well maintained and appear to provide excellent conditions for passing adult fish. We appreciate your consideration in making these modifications to the adult count stations in a timely fashion.

Sincerely,



Paul Wagner, NOAA Fisheries
Fish Passage Advisory Committee Chairman
Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Idaho Fish and Game
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service



Kathryn Kostow, ODFW
Chair, US v OR Technical Advisory Committee
Idaho Fish and Game
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
Yakima Nation
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
Nez Perce Tribe

cc:

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Dana Jeske
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