

Upper Columbia White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative Technical Working Group



FINAL NOTES

January 9, 2012 – Teleconference

1:00 PM PDT

TWG Co-Chairs: Deanne-Pavlik Kunkel (U.S.) and Jim Powell (Canada)

Number: 1-877-353 9184

Participant code: 8797568#

PART 1 – TWG BUSINESS AND GENERAL COORDINATION

1. Call participants:

Alison Squier (Facilitator), Bill Duncan (Golder Assoc.), Bob Hallock (Citizen), Courtney Druse (DFO), Deanne Pavlik-Kunkel (STOI), Gerry Nellestijn (CWG Chair), Heidi McGregor (ONA), Jamie Crossman (BC Hydro), Jasper Lament (BC Hydro), Jim Powell (FFSBC), Matt Howell (WDFW), Matt Neufeld (BC MFLNRO), Mike Parsley (USGS), Mitch Combs (WDFW), Ron Ek (FFSBC), Scott Bettin (BPA), and Sheila Street (Fortis BC).

2. Identify any agenda additions

There were no additional agenda items identified. Mike P. reported that today is the last day of the rearing experiment and that he'll have an update to present at the April meeting.

Alison asked if the group wanted to coordinate on a card or gift for Gary Birch since he is resigning. Gerry said he talked about putting together a gift and possibly coordinating on a sturgeon sculpture. Jamie is also collecting money to purchase something for Gary. TWG members should contact Jamie and Gerry if they'd like to contribute something.

Alison asked Jasper Lament to introduce himself. Jasper explained that BC Hydro has reorganized their environmental functions. Gary Birch has moved into a new role in the corporate Safety Health & Environment group, and Jasper will be picking up his species at risk file including participation in the UCWSRI-TWG, at least for the short time. Jasper said he doesn't have Gary's white sturgeon background so he will operate in a slightly different role than Gary had.

3. Conflict of interest check (standing agenda item)

No one identified any conflicts of interest with any of the agenda items.

4. Next teleconferences and meeting dates

4a. Upcoming teleconference dates

- February 15 – 1 pm PDT
- March 12 – 1 pm PDT
- May 22 – 1 pm PDT

The group discussed who will be able to host future teleconferences. Jim indicated that they would not be able to host them all. Courtney provided a teleconference line for the next call in February. Steve McAdam indicated he would be able to provide a line after he returns from paternity leave in April. Scott Bettin said he would be able to offer a line for a call or two as well. Bill Duncan indicated that the group could use the Teck line between now and April also if needed.

Follow-up actions:

- Courtney will provide the teleconference line for the February call.
- Bill Duncan will provide the teleconference line for the March call.

4b. April 2012 meeting

The April 2012 TWG meeting will be in the US and will be held concurrently with the Lake Roosevelt Forum (LRF) conference. The LRF conference is on April 16 and 17, 2012.

At the November meeting, participants agreed to hold April 17, 18 and 19 open for the TWG meeting. The agenda may include public presentations on the afternoon of the 17th, a full or partial day work session on the 18th to discuss TWG business and research, and a full or partial day on the 18th and/or 19th to review the first draft of the Recovery Plan update and talk about the operational plan(s). The group will follow-up to determine meeting specifics in February and March.

5. Recovery Plan progress update

Alison said that Llewellyn was going to be late for the call or might not be able to make it. Llewellyn had requested that they hold off this agenda item.

In the interim Mike P. reported that he and Larry are putting together the materials and that the existing knowledge section should be updated in a couple weeks.

Jamie C. reported that the oversight group and the contractors had we a kick off meeting in December and used only about a half hour since Mike and Larry did a good job of putting the proposal together and were very familiar with the existing information.

6. University of Saskatchewan hatchery origin white sturgeon

Courtney Druse explained that she had requested time to talk with the group about two live hatchery-origin white sturgeon that were used in University of Saskatchewan effluent toxicity research work and whether there is any interest in these fish from a scientific perspective.

She explained that they recently learned that there were a couple white sturgeons in the Museum of Natural History in Saskatoon. These two juvenile sturgeons were left overs from an effluent study that David Vardy et al. conducted in 2008. They are not surplus fish; they were in the study so they were exposed to effluent. Unfortunately not all of the study fish were culled.

She explained that she wanted to see whether anyone has any interest in these two fish for use in a study. The facility that is holding them can't keep them indefinitely because the tank isn't big enough and the fish will outgrow the tank if they live long enough. They've had these fish since 2009.

Discussion:

- Scott B. asked if they have a Cabela's nearby? If so they might be interested in taking them. Bill D. said there is a new Cabela's opening in Saskatoon.
- Bill D. suggested that the Nanaimo sturgeon center might be interested.
- Courtney said she's not sure of their sex. Given that they're legacy fish they are not sure if they'd be good broodstock candidates. The Nanaimo facility doesn't hold any individuals from listed populations. The study concluded when they were 66 days old, so they are about 3 years old.
- Matt N. expressed concern about the potential precedent that would be set by giving the fish to Cabela's or a similar facility. They should have been culled.
- Courtney D. said she agreed. And they can ask them to cull the fish now or later, but she wanted to see if there was any scientific interest in them first.
- Jamie C. said that with lake sturgeon they had a few from research and there was big public interest in them keeping them, lots of folks offered to keep them, but they ultimately said no to everyone except a large aquarium that had capacity to hold them.

Follow-up:

- TWG members to let Courtney know if they hear of any scientific need for the fish.

PART 2 – TECHNICAL COORDINATION AND URGENT TECHNICAL ISSUES

7. Mortality check (new standing agenda item)

There were no mortalities reported.

8. Conservation Culture

8a. Hatchery update/discussion US

Mitch C. reported that they had another successful brood year. On December 1, 2011 they released 3,590 PIT tagged white sturgeon. They put them Lake Roosevelt at RM 702 near Kettle Falls. They were about 23.4 grams each at release, and 140 ml fork length. Because of the late and high water year, they had to heat the river water. Next year they will include use of heated water at an earlier stage and they would also like to try for earlier release that's not quite so far into the winter, probably around the first of November.

8b. Hatchery update/discussion Canada

Ron E. said that everything is going as planned. They will start marking fish in February. There are releases planned for April and May.

8c. Advance coordination for 2012 public releases

On the May TWG call members discussed some concerns related to oversight and handling of fish at Revelstoke release. Bill G. agreed to coordinate a teleconference with Bill D., Heidi, Ron, Gerry, and Angus to talk about next years planning and how to improve care and handling. The group will also talk about an alternate release location.

Ron said that Bill G. scheduled a call with the subgroup on January 25 to go over the Revelstoke release plans. Last year the release was spread out in town and the park. This year the location will be moved south of town toward the ferry area. They plan to do all the releases down that way.

9. Technical updates and/or technical issues requiring immediate attention

9a. Telemetry check-in (placeholder)

Matt H. said there were no telemetry issues to report; Jamie C. said the same.

Jamie C. noted that they got some results back on the work Larry's group and ONA were doing to test a GPS array in the Arrow area, similar to what Jason's done in Lake Roosevelt. The initial results look pretty good. It looks promising to set something up, up there in the future.

9b. US – Roosevelt reach update

Matt H. said there's not much to report at this time.

Going back to hatchery side of things, they sent off DNA samples collected from the fish they released including 500 fish from 2011, and 522 from the 2010 brood year. They sent those to Andrea for analysis.

Deanne reported that the Spokane Tribe, WDFW and Colville Tribes submitted their resident fish proposals for the NPCC and BPA funding cycle. The proposals are for funding for the next 5 years (2013-2017). The proposal was based on the outline that Jason and Matt produced and the TWG discussed at the November meeting. They are proposing to continue with the hatchery program using wild fish and broodstock as necessary.

9c. Canada – HLK to Border and REV to HLK

Jamie C. said there's not much to report since the November meeting. He'll present more detail on a future call or at the April meeting.

9d. Canada – Kinbasket

Jamie C. said there's not much to report since the November meeting. He'll present more detail on a future call or at the April meeting.

10. New projects or opportunities

There were no new projects or other discussion items.

11. New technical reports and/or requested report reviews (placeholder)

11a. Recruitment hindcasting

This item is a placeholder for when Steve M. is back from parental leave.

Jamie C. noted that he is meeting with Louise Porto this week. She is doing a project similar to what Steve was working on. Jamie will be talking with her about her data needs this week. They only have a limited number of fish with the range of ages, so they will probably work up a similar data set that Steve. Bill D. added that Louise be putting together historical data and timeline. She's a bit behind, and is now just starting to focus on the project.

12. Database subcommittees

12a. Capture database subcommittee placeholder (James Crossman)

Jamie said there was nothing to report.

12b. Telemetry database subcommittee placeholder (Matt Howell)

Matt H. said there was nothing to report.

12c. Culture database subcommittee placeholder (Jim Powell)

Jim P. said they are working on the final touches of the database. Wallace has been contracted for the month of February and will polish it off.

PART 3 – CANADIAN TWG BUSINESS AND CANADIAN PROCESS FOCUS

13. CWG update

Gerry N. said that everyone (TWG members) should have gotten a copy of the request for financial information for the annual report. Gerry sent a request to Jamie as well to check up on project progress. They are starting to hone in on what the annual report will look like. They are hoping to get that done ASAP. They got statements from the various chairs and are accumulating a bunch of photographs. Whatever folks can do to finish up the financial request and provide project updates will be very helpful. Gerry will send the annual report draft for review soon, probably next week.

In terms of the web site, the designer has finished updates to the navigational requests that the TWG provided in November. He's been in the UK for the holidays. They are hoping he'll be working on the home page edits in next few weeks. They will probably have something pretty complete to present by the April TWG meeting.

14. Recovery Strategy and permitting update

Courtney D. said they are hoping to get some additional help coming on in the new fiscal year to get the document finished.

15. White Sturgeon Necropsy Protocol

Courtney said the protocol is more or less done. They are still having trouble arranging the funding account. It turns out that DFO can't hold funds as had been proposed. They can do it

with BC Hydro because Hydro is a Crown corporation, but they can't do it with other funds. She said the protocol is good to go; she'd like to just deal with the funding issue on an ad hoc basis if that's okay with everyone.

Discussion:

- TWG members said that approach was fine.
- Bill D. asked if BC Hydro would be willing to hold the funds of others?
- Courtney suggested that was something we could discuss at a future date but for now she'd like to just let things play out and manage it as issues come up.

16. Wrap up

The next UCWSRI-TWG teleconference is February 15, 2011 at 1 pm PDT.