

**Willamette Action Team for Ecosystem Restoration (WATER)
Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RM&E)
February 7, 2019 Conference Call**

http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/tmt/documents/FPOM/2010/Willamette_Coordination/Willamette%20RME/RME.html

Final Facilitator’s Summary

(Edits provided by NMFS and Corps)

ACTION	BY WHOM?	BY WHEN?
Work with the Corps to update the permit applications for the Fall Creek and LOP screw traps.	Diana	ASAP
Consult with Mary Karen Scullion/others regarding water management and flow information for Foster Fish Weir interim operation.	Fenton	ASAP
Contact BPA to understand what analysis is needed for Foster Fish Weir interim operation.	Fenton	ASAP
Schedule a meeting with water managers and RM&E team members to further discuss Foster Fish Weir interim operation.	Fenton	ASAP

Document Review Tracking ([Click here for Master “tracking” Spreadsheet](#))

Document Name	Document Type	Comments Due By	Comments received / forthcoming from
Evaluation of Foster Adult Fish Trap Performance, 2019 (APH-15-05-FOS)	Pre-Proposal	November 2	CTGR, ODFW and NMFS provided comments
	Status: On hold; PDT considering design fix & reviewing for data gaps.		
Evaluation of Chinook Salmon Fry Survival at Lookout Point Reservoir, Oregon, 2017 (USGS)	Draft report	November 2	CTGR, ODFW & NMFS provided comments
Evaluate interim management strategies for adult UWR Chinook Salmon at Big Cliff/Detroit Dams (APH-19-03)	Pre-Proposal	TBD	
	Status: NOAA & Corps reworking concept; on hold due to furlough.		
Evaluation of Foster Adult Holding and Transport (APH -19-XX-FOS)	Concept Paper	November 30	NMFS provided comments
	Status: Comments suggested revising concept to a “synthesis”; Corps is revising and then will present to the Steering Team for ranking.		
Copepods In UWR Reservoirs (JPL-19-03-SYS)	Pre-Proposal	TBD - pending more info	CTGR, ODFW and NMFS provided comments
FY19 Wild Fish Surrogate Proposal	Proposal	December 10	ODFW: no comments. NMFS approves and is working with Corps and OSU to permit

Evaluation of a spring and summer spill at LOP (JPL-19-01-LOP)	Concept Paper	TBD – pending more info	COE provided comments
	Status: Ian bringing policy question to the Steering Team.		
Fall Creek Prespawn Mortality Pilot 2017	Draft report	December 21	

Participants on the phone: Leslie Bach (NPCC), Diana Dishman (NMFS), Mike Hudson (USFWS), Dave Jepsen (ODFW), Fenton Kahn (USACE), Jim Meyers (NOAA), Todd Pierce (USACE), Lawrence Schwabe (CTGR).

Facilitation Team: Nancy Pionk and Colby Mills (DS Consulting).

Welcome, Housekeeping, and Updates

Nancy welcomed the participants on the phone and conducted a round of introductions.

Permits for Screw Trapping

Diana Dishman, NMFS, checked in with the group regarding the need for permits for screw trapping below Lookout Point and Fall Creek. The Corps had previously operated these screw traps in conjunction with RM&E studies in past years. The Corps applied to renew the permits for 2019, however the rationale for the permits was based on the older studies that were not scheduled to happen in 2019. Diana had previously checked in with Greg Taylor and ODFW and based on these conversations, determined that there are not urgent screw trapping locations with higher priorities than these locations.

Diana noted that Fall Creek has been associated with Kathleen O’Malley’s study. Kathleen’s study is not funded to process genetic pedigree work of juveniles at this time. However, Kathleen manages the statewide archive of samples and indicated that it would be helpful to her research to continue to collect genetic samples of juveniles below Fall Creek, and those samples could be processed and analyzed in the future as funding is made available.

As for the Lookout Point screw trap, USGS has completed their study at Lookout Point for 2018, and no work is scheduled for 2019. However, Diana noted that if a spill operation is conducted at LOP this spring, it would still be useful to get information about the sizes of fish that are passing. Fenton noted that there is no spill operation planned for spring; however, there may be an opportunity for voluntary spill where sampling could occur. Todd emphasized the importance of coordinating flow and spill when operating the screw trap at LOP, as sometimes spilling alone is not enough to spin a screw trap. Fenton confirmed that the Corps would coordinate the logistics for the operation if there is a decision to voluntarily spill.

Diana proposed to update the permit applications to be consistent with the two potential information needs noted above, so that the Corps has the authority to do sampling, if desired. This approach can be revisited if operation or research needs change. RM&E team members agreed that there were no other high priority needs for a different location for screw traps and agreed with the proposed approach for the permit applications.

→ **Action:** Diana will work with the Corps to update the permit application for the Fall Creek screw trap to provide coverage for sampling of juveniles and update the permit application for the LOP screw trap to provide coverage for sampling in the event of voluntary spill.

Foster Fish Weir Interim Operations for Spring Passage

Fenton reminded the group of last fall's report that identified high rates of injuries and mortalities with the new fish weir during the first year of RM&E testing. He has checked with the researchers about data needs from interim weir operations for this spring. The weir operation in previous years has begun in early to mid-March. Based on data from the live fish studies and the sensor fish, the researchers recommend operating the weir at the 500 cfs flow, rather than the previously tested 300 cfs flow which proved to be more detrimental, due to passage conditions at the lower flow. The group discussed the following options for operations:

1. Operate a spill bay instead of operating the weir. It was noted that this is considered safer for fish. However, because there is limited water in the South Santiam, maintaining the minimum flows for spawning and incubation is difficult. Further, the bays are so large that flows are about 800 cfs at minimum gate opening. The BiOp requirement for flow through March 15 is 800 cfs. It is possible that all that flow could potentially go through the spill bay, but it would need to be coordinated with water management, BPA, etc., because the turbines could not be operated.
2. Operate the fish weir at 500 cfs, starting either on March 1 or March 15, depending on flow conditions. If minimum flows between now and March 15 are 800 cfs, operations must be coordinated with water management, because if the weir is operating at 500 cfs, there still needs to be at least 800 cfs running through the turbines to prevent cavitation. After March 15 however, the minimum flow is 1500 cfs, so there should not be a problem balancing the weir operation with the turbine operation. The weir operates at low pool through April 20, then high pool from May 1 – June 15, and the operation normally terminates June 15; when most steelhead have passed and few fish are documented to be outmigrating through Foster during summer months.
3. Operate the fish weir during peak passage time (i.e. night-time). Fenton noted that this operation would need to be confirmed with Foster operators to vet issues regarding ramp rates and opening/closing the gates.

Fenton noted that Mary Karen Scullion, USACE Water Management, is concerned that the long-term forecasts are suggesting a very dry spring. Anne Mullan and Elise Kelley are also concerned about filling in spring, in light of the forecast.

Further conversations with flow management and Mary Karen, may be needed to discuss how to operate the weir this spring if flows are low.

ODFW and NMFS noted that their preference would be to use the spill bay instead of the fish weir based on the preliminary report of field test findings. However, if the necessary authorizations/permissions for operating the spill bay could not be obtained, then they would support operating the fish weir at 500 cfs instead of 300 cfs and start operations on March 1. ODFW and CTGR also supported maximizing fish passage by operating the weir at night during peak passage time. CTGR and USFW also supported operating the weir at 500 cfs.

The group agreed to the following next steps regarding Foster fish weir interim operations:

→ **Actions:**

1. Fenton will consult with Mary Karen and others to get more information regarding water management and flow.
2. Fenton will contact BPA to understand what is needed in terms of analysis for an operation (i.e. special operations request, modeling etc.).
3. Fenton will then schedule a special meeting with water managers and interested RM&E team members to further discuss what the interim operation will be and when it will start.

Lookout Point Spill Proposal

Mike Hudson, USFWS, sought clarification regarding the status of the Lookout Point spill study. He indicated that the federal family recently discussed the project at the Steering Team level and his understanding was that the Action Agencies do not feel that this would be part of the long-term solution for passage at Lookout Point. Mike noted that this type of study was anticipated in the Middle Fork Willamette RM&E plan and raised the concern that the team will not have information that may be useful in making a decision when a decision point is reached for the Middle Fork. Additionally, he was concerned that the possibility of spill as part of a long-term solution in conjunction with some other solution for passage not be discounted. Mike noted that the Steering Team would be discussing this issue at their meeting today and may look to the RM&E team for clarification on what is being requested. Mike proposed that the RM&E ask researchers to assess this issue with regard to spill and passage of fry at Lookout Point.

Diana identified variables that needed to be determined regarding the spill study 1) whether the Corps would be doing the operation itself, and 2) doing a study of the operation. If the operation will occur then the RM&E team can determine whether there are additional information needs associated with the operation, specifically related to fish size at time of passage (as discussed previously).

Fenton clarified that the Corps' position is that there is enough data for smolt-sized fish and there was no need to pursue another year of study for smolt-sized fish. RM&E team members agreed, that based on information from the pilot study and last year's study, there was not a need for another year of study regarding smolt-sized fish.

With regard to fry, Dave indicated that there was a need to better understand the flow/spill relationship to survival for the smaller fish. Lawrence also supported research to better understand distribution of fry in the reservoir. Fenton noted that the Corps had not taken the position that fry could not be studied, however the Corps does not see a need for a study because, the Corps' perspective is that spill is not a long-term solution for fish passage. He agreed that the RM&E Team could work with researchers to determine how to implement a study for fry passage and survival at Lookout Point and Dexter Dams, if this is an operation that the Team sees as an interim operation. The RM&E Team would have to develop the objectives for the interim spill operation. The Corps' perspective is that it is too late in the season to pursue a study for this spring; however, if the Steering Team determined that the study should go forward on a policy level, to inform either an interim or long-term operation, then the RM&E team could work with researchers to determine how best to do a study involving fry passage and survival.

Fenton noted that the Corps does not see a spill operation as a permanent solution for fish passage at Lookout Point. Diana noted that it can be beneficial to consider a combination of operations and structures operation and that it was too early to rule things out. She proposed that the focus for this discussion be on the immediate future of the next 10-15 years. Dave was also interested in keeping open the possibility of using spill with another solution.

The RM&E Team agreed that further direction is needed from the Steering Team on 1) whether to conduct a spill operation this year or in the future; and 2) whether the concept should be pursued as a long-term solution or an interim operation. RM&E members agreed, that if an operation is conducted, there is a need to study fry and a research team could be convened to help determine how best to do a study to evaluate fry passage and survival.

Potential Furlough Impacts and Planning Needs

Fenton reported on the take permit for wild winter steelhead surrogates. He, Diana, Elise Kelly, and Karen from Oregon State University discussed the permitting strategy for wild winter steelhead for the Foster study. They have determined a path forward for collecting the eggs for the surrogates program. Karen will submit the permit so Diana can review by February 15. [Facilitator's Note: After the 2/7/19 conference call, Fenton shared that, at the meeting between Fenton, Diana, Elise and Karen, they also discussed the fate of the steelhead, if for any reason, a study is not conducted at Foster in 2021. It was determined that, in the event a study does not occur,

the steelhead would be released in the South Santiam river, downstream of Foster Dam. Diana noted that the steelhead will be PIT tagged before release as a condition of the permit.

Science Review Update

Fenton reminded the group that the Willamette Science Review has been rescheduled to March 12-14, 2019. Team members are urged to register ahead of time to get on the distribution list and reserve their space as capacity is limited at the auditorium

With that, Nancy thanked the group for their patience and willingness to problem-solve, and concluded the call.

The next RM&E Meeting is scheduled for 2/28/2019 from 9 AM to 1 PM

This summary is provided by DS Consulting. Suggested edits are welcome and can be provided to Nancy Pionk (nancy@dsconsult.co).