

Jeffery C. Allen
Chair
Idaho

Ed Schriever
Idaho

Doug Grob
Montana

Mike Milburn
Montana



Northwest **Power** and **Conservation** Council

KC Golden
Vice Chair
Washington

Washington

Ginny Burdick
Oregon

Louie Pitt, Jr.
Oregon

Council Meeting Summary **March 15, 2023** **at Coeur d'Alene, ID and via Webinar**

This is a summary of the Council's March public meeting and the actions the Council decided upon. The meeting agenda, presentation materials; recording of each agenda item during the meeting; and subsequent documentation of any decisions by the Council are posted at <https://www.nwcouncil.org/calendar/council-meeting-2023-03-14/>.

March 15, 2023

Council Chair Jeffery Allen brought the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. Council Members Ginny Burdick, KC Golden, Doug Grob, Mike Milburn, Louis Pitt, and Ed Schriever were in attendance via webinar. The next Council meeting is scheduled for April 11-12, 2023, via webinar.

Council Chair Jeffery Allen welcomed new Council member from Idaho, Ed Schriever.

Reports from Committees Chairs and Executive Director

Power Committee

Member Grob, power committee chair, reported on the power committee meeting held on March 14, 2023.

1. Work Plan and Objectives for Mid-Term Assessment

The power committee discussed the proposed work plan for the years 2023-2024 and the goals for the 2021 Power Plan Mid-Term Assessment. The mid-term assessment's scope had implications for the division's near-term work and the timing of the assessment's delivery. The meeting's overall objective was to reach a preliminary agreement on the assessment's scope and timing to ensure that the work planned in the next year or two was sufficient to meet the Council's and region's needs.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18211/2023_03_p1.pdf.

2. Briefing on Bonneville's Provider of Choice (Post-2028 Contract Negotiations) and Resource Program

Kim Thompson, Vice President of Requirements Marketing, and Bill Leady, Vice President of Generation Asset Management, from Bonneville Power Administration, presented their efforts for the Post-2028 Contract Negotiations (also known as Provider of Choice) and Resource Program in the past. Thompson gave an overview of the contract negotiation process and timeline, highlighting the key areas of discussion that Bonneville was working through with the region. Leady provided an overview of the upcoming 2024 Resource Program and its relationship to the post-2028 contract negotiations process.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18207/2023_03_p2.pdf.

3. Presentation on BPA's Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2022-2027

Bonnie Watson, Interim Planning & Evaluation Manager, and Eric Mullendore, Acting Manager for Energy Efficiency Programs from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), presented a summary of their Draft Energy Efficiency Action Plan covering the period from 2022 through 2027 in the past. The Energy Efficiency Action Plan forecasted how BPA and its public power customers could achieve their energy efficiency target and meet various customer and resource-driven needs. The draft action plan was issued in February 2023 and predicted savings from 2022 through 2027. Bonneville had an open comment period for the draft plan until March 17, 2023. The presentation and discussion aimed to inform any Council comments on the EE Action Plan.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18206/2023_03_p3.pdf.

Fish and Wildlife Committee

Member Milburn, fish and wildlife committee chair, reported on the fish and wildlife committee meeting held on March 14, 2023.

1. Dworshak Fishery Mitigation: Rebuilding Fisheries from the Bottom Up

Ryan Hardy, principal fishery research biologist from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) presented an update on the Dworshak Fishery Mitigation, a component of project #2019-005-00. Lake Pend Oreille/Dworshak implemented status and trend monitoring and evaluation of resident fish species, improved reservoir conditions for resident fish species, and managed predators to address multiple areas of the 2014 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and the 2020 Addendum.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18213/2023_03_f1.pdf.

2. Update on the Council's Asset Management Strategic Plan Implementation

Bonneville and Council staff provided an overview of the Asset Management Strategic Plan and discussed integrating the reserves distribution clause funds for non-recurring maintenance needs for past fish and wildlife investments. They provided timelines and expectations regarding the matter. A staff recommendation to the Fish and Wildlife Committee for funding non-recurring maintenance needs is anticipated in May, with a Committee recommendation to the full Council expected in June.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18215/2023_03_f2.pdf.

3. Draft 2023 Fish and Wildlife Division Workplan

Patty O'Toole, fish and wildlife division director, and staff reviewed the Fish and Wildlife Work Division Plan highlights for 2023. Key tasks include completing planning for an updated approach to project review, implementation of the Council's Asset Management Strategic Plan and continued work on tasks to better understand and report on the overall performance of the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program through time.

For the report and the presentation materials, see https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18214/2023_03_f3.pdf.

Public Affairs Committee

Member Louie Pitt Jr., Public Affairs Committee Chair, reported on the public affairs committee.

Member Pitt Jr. reported that the committee is hiring a communications expert to help with public relations work. Member Pitt Jr. informed that the committee is working on a congressional tour scheduled for August.

Executive Director Report

Executive Director Bill Edmonds highlighted the strategic performance indicators (SPIs) project from the Fish and Wildlife Department. The SPIs are a valuable resource available to the public. Edmonds provided insight into the data source and program strategies being utilized. Edmonds also mentioned John Fazio's retirement from the Council after a successful 39-year career.

Council Meeting Agenda Items

1. Briefing on Columbia River Basin Salmon and Steelhead Returns for 2022 and Forecasts for 2023

Council staff, Mark Fritsch introduced Charlene Hurst, Columbia River Management Unit Lead Fish Program of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, John Powell, ESA Program Coordinator of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Art Martin, Columbia River Coordination Section Manager of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to provide an overview on salmon and steelhead run forecasts for the Columbia River and Snake River basin.

Hurst provided a high-level fisheries overview in the Columbia River Basin. Hurst explained the six fisheries zones and the management framework, including agreements and treaties. Hurst informed the Council of the 2022 non-Indian commercial and sport fisheries seasons with information on target fish species and geographical areas. Hurst provided information on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which consists of staff from federal, tribal, and state entities. TAC reconstructs' Columbia River salmon and steelhead returns post-season, develops pre-season forecasts, and provides in-season run size updates.

Hurst presented charts with the abundance of chinook salmon, sockeye, coho, and steelhead including the 2022 actual and 2023 forecast numbers. The return of upriver spring chinook is increasing while upriver summer steelhead is declining, leading to limited steelhead-directed fisheries due to poor forecasts. Hurst highlighted that the

actual return of sockeye was larger than forecast in 2022, but the forecasts for coho, sockeye, and steelhead returns in 2023 are lower than the actual returns in 2022, resulting in a total salmon and steelhead return forecasted to be approximately 1 million less than last year's return.

Powell presented 2022 returns and 2023 forecasts for the Snake River hatchery and wild chinook, sockeye, steelhead, salmon at the Lower Granite dam. Powell mentioned that the recreational fisheries in Idaho was able to operate in all river sections for the first time in 6 years. Powell highlighted Snake River chinook and sockeye returns are on the rise, but the forecast for 2023 salmon returns is lower than the actual 2022 returns, yet higher than 2022 forecasts. The Snake River summer steelhead forecast for 2023-2024 is the lowest ever, and the salmonid return to Lower Granite Dam is still below the goals set by the Columbia Basin Partnership.

Member Schriever asked if the trend of stock exceeding forecast will continue. Powell indicated that in the Snake River basin, they tend to under forecast as they are moving out of a trough and over forecast into a trough. Powell mentioned that he optimistically believes that the trend will continue. Member Golden asked about the ocean conditions and the competition among the fish. Hurst responded that the ocean conditions are less hopeful for steelhead.

Presentation materials are at: https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18208/2023_03_1.pdf.

2. Briefing on Recent Ocean Observations and Outlooks for Salmon Returns in 2023

Council staff, Mark Fritsch introduced Brian Burke, Supervisor Research Fish Biologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Northwest Fisheries Science Center, presented his research findings and outlook on chinook and coho returns to the Columbia River based on indicators of ocean conditions. Burke explained that the ocean survival rate for chinook and coho salmon is the lowest of all life stages, averaging about one percent. He emphasized that salmon population trends are largely determined by the conditions they encounter when they first enter the ocean, but marine conditions are currently in decline, despite occasional good years such as 2021. Effective management strategies are needed that address both the freshwater and marine environments to mitigate the declining population trends of salmon and promote their long-term sustainability.

Burke presented larger-scale metrics, including the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), used to understand the ocean environment and its effects on salmon. However, Burke

highlighted that the PDO is becoming less useful for salmon survival due to changes in climate and the ecosystem, and the relationship between PDO and salmon survival is shifting. He provided historical data indicating that correlation is not a mechanistic driver of salmon survival. Burke also shared information about the correlation between salmon survival and El Nino weather patterns, explaining that survival rates are lower during active El Nino periods and higher during active La Nina periods. Currently, La Nina conditions are over, and the waters of the equator are starting to dissipate and be replaced with warmer water, leading NOAA to expect neutral or warmer water in the equator, which could result in a lower survival rate for salmon.

Burke also discussed marine heatwaves, which are direct measures of temperature, where ocean waters are warmer than average. Pacific marine heatwaves are increasing in size in the Northeast Pacific, directly affecting salmon. Burke warned that the global mean surface temperature and the probability of marine heatwaves are increasing. He also indicated that range expansion is a biological response that can completely change the dynamic of the ecosystem because fish are cold-blooded, and their range is set by the temperature of the water. Burke provided details on the sea temperature forecast for the upcoming summer, indicating that coastal water is colder than the water of north north Pacific. He mentioned that the forecast suggests warmer waters in the northern hemisphere, which is concerning for the survival of salmon in the open ocean.

Burke then presented on the work that NOAA Fisheries does to maintain data streams, including the Newport Hydrographic Line, Juvenile Salmon and Ocean Ecosystem Survey, and SOBad Advance Technologies and Emerging Tools, for the purpose of gathering data, tracking species, and learning more about the salmon ecosystem in the ocean. He also provided 2023 estimates for salmon returns to Bonneville dam, which include 186K adult spring chinook and 739K adult fall chinook, based on dynamic linear models. Burke mentioned that a mechanistic ecosystem approach like the WRAP Salmon Marine Survival Project would be best to better understand the ecosystem and its relative data to create a more precise stoplight model.

Presentation materials are at: https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18210/2023_03_2.pdf.

3. Annual Update on BPA Progress to Significantly Increase the Level of Mitigation in the Blocked Areas Above Chief Joe and Grand Coulee Dam

Council staff Stacy Horton introduced Chad McCrea, Natural Resources Director, Spokane Tribe of Indians; Brent Nichols, Division Director Fisheries and Water Resources, Spokane Tribe of Indians; BJ Kieffer, Policy Advisor, Spokane Tribe of Indians and Jason Sweet, Executive Manager Fish & Wildlife Program, Bonneville

Power Administration (BPA) to provide the Council with an update on efforts to increase mitigation in the blocked areas above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams, as called for in the 2020 Addendum to the 2014 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.

During the presentation, McCrea informed the Council that the report is a progress update provided by the Spokane Tribe of Indians and the BPA. The report outlines their efforts to enhance and expand mitigation measures in the areas above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. McCrea explained that according to the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program Addendum, the Spokane Tribe and BPA are obligated to present an annual report that describes their actions taken to address significant unresolved mitigation impacts. One of the significant components of the project is the reintroduction of salmon to the blocked areas.

McCrea, representing the Spokane Tribe of Indians, expressed their belief that the mitigation efforts have progressed only in small steps so far, and they are waiting on BPA to make meaningful progress on the Council's program implementation. Additionally, McCrea mentioned that BPA has allocated an increased funding of 1.5 million dollars across several tribal projects.

Sweet highlighted that some of the projects on the list are not new and have been under discussion not just as part of the Council's program but also in ongoing settlement negotiations with the US Government and other parties. Sweet emphasized that the BPA's primary focus is on increasing efforts to benefit fish above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. The project list reflects a meaningful increase in both old and new programs. Sweet expects a significant budget increase to commence from the calendar year 2023, which will enable the implementation phase to begin. Sweet confirmed that funds have already been allocated to the projects and is looking forward to their implementation. BPA is prioritizing short-term projects with immediate benefits for fish this year while excluding areas that require long lead time. By working through the project list, Sweet highlighted a substantial increase in the amount of work BPA has been able to accomplish with the Spokane Tribe.

Member Pitt Jr. expressed his hope for continued funding progress stating that a long-term view is necessary to make a difference. Member Pitt Jr. emphasized the importance of funding and communication between organizations. Chair Allen inquired if the current reviews and scope of work were sufficient to accommodate the proposed additions. Sweet replied that more time and effort might be required. Nichols mentioned that they are currently focusing on projects that have been reviewed and part of the tribe's portfolio of projects but are not yet funded. Member Golden expressed his concern about the budget being lower than in previous years and asked for clarification

on what constitutes a significant increase. Sweet responded that there had been a 2.3M increase from last year and noted some variation in prior years, including an increase in one year for a new trap. Member Golden inquired about the timeframe for a significant increase, to which Sweet indicated that they are running a couple of parallel processes and will have a conversation with the Spokane Tribe regarding long-term commitment.

Presentation materials are at: https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18209/2023_03_3.pdf.

1. Council Business

Approval of February 2023 Council Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Golden moved that the Council approve for signature by the vice chair the minutes of the February 14-15, 2023 Council Meeting, held at Portland, Oregon and via webinar, as presented by staff.

Member Milburn seconded.

No discussion.

Voice vote – all in favor, none opposed.

Motion was approved.

The approved minutes of the February 2023 Council meeting and other materials from that meeting are at https://www.nwcouncil.org/fs/18212/2023_03_4.pdf.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Chair Allen adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m.