

**Wildlife Advisory Committee
Operational Losses Subcommittee
May, 29, 2014
Spokane, WA**

DRAFT Meeting Notes

Attendees: Tom Kerrier (NPCC), Jason Kesling (BPT), Paul Ashley (PSMFC), Kelly Singer (CCT), Katie Earon (STOI), Tom Prewitt (CDAT), Carl Scheeler (CTUIR), Norm Merz (KTOI), Kathy Cousins (IDFG), Peter Paquet (NPCC), Dwight Bergeron (MFWP), Alan Wood (MFWP), BJ Kieffer (STOI), and Neil Ward (QW Consulting)

By Phone: Chris Weaton (PSMFC), Aren Eddingsaas (SBT), Tom O’Neill (NHI), Philip Key (BPA), and Paul Dahmer (WDFW)

Item 1	Introductions and Approval of Agenda
	Tom Karrier welcomed the participants to Spokane and informed them that he views the WAC as being a good forum through which comments can be submitted for the DRAFT Program.
Item 2	Briefing on Draft Fish and Wildlife Program Related Issues
	<p>Peter Paquet provided an overview of the Wildlife Mitigation Section of the NPCC’s Draft Fish and Wildlife Program with emphasis on the portions pertaining to operational losses. Peter informed the group that the NPCC continues to endorse the existing Program language and that the proposed program language was copied from the WAC Charter. Peter stressed that the proposed language is DRAFT and that it can change as a result of public comments.</p> <p>To help the participants better understand the amendment process and how the NPCC addresses public comments, Peter provided the following generalized steps that the NPCC staff uses to ensure all comments are addressed :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compile all of the comments into appropriate categories 2. Summarize comments by the issues the commenters are addressing 3. Comments presented to the NPCC’s Fish and Wildlife Committee and then the full NPCC Council, to evaluate if the recommendations are relevant 4. Provide response to commenters, which is required by law. The responses become a component of the Program and the Program is not “final” until this stage is completed. <p>In addition, Peter emphasized that comments presented during WAC meetings are considered official and that he would forward any and all comments to the NPCC.</p> <p>Some of the meeting’s participants expressed concern that the comments their organization submitted were not include in the first draft, For example, Carl Scheeler expressed his dissatisfaction with the NPCC’s decision to not include the CTUIR’s comments pertaining to renewable energy and transmission lines. Peter informed the group that the NPCC evaluated whether it was appropriate to assign such recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Program or the Power Plan and that they decided the Power Plan was the most appropriate location for such recommendations. Peter suggested that he believes addressing the renewable energy and transmission recommendations, through the Power Plan, has the same legal effect. Participants asked how they would address such areas. Peter indicated that at this time he is unsure of how it will be addressed and that the NPCC is still deciding how to move forward.</p>

	<p>One potential approach would be to consider that which has been develop for protected areas relative to hydro-development and operations (i.e., certain areas are “off-limits” due to fish and wildlife values). Carl expressed a desire for the renewable energy and transmission recommendations to be included in the Fish and Wildlife Program because he believes the Power-side of the NPCC lacks biologists that would ensure the best interests of wildlife are protected.</p> <p>Other participants suggested that the WAC may not be capable of presenting a suite of comments, as requested by the NPCC. For example, BJ Kieffer expressed concern whether the WAC is capable of coming to an agreement on a specific set of recommendations. BJ referenced how the CBFWA often struggled to secure consensus and suggested that he does not envision the NPCC being able to facilitate agreement among the wildlife managers. BJ indicated that the STOI submitted an amendment “package” and expressed concern relative the potential submittal of recommendations that are not approved of by the STOI. BJ cautioned Peter in that any document that is provided by the WAC or NPCC and is not supported by all of the interested parties will lead individuals to compare the effort to the recommendations that the CBFWA provided during its final years.</p> <p>The concerns expressed by BJ were reinforced via the letter (Attachment 1) that the UCUT organization submitted during the May 28, 2014, WAC HEP Subcommittee meeting. The UCUT expressed the opinion that “the WAC is currently making decisions without the participation of all wildlife managers in the Basin, and mischaracterizing them as consensus decisions.”</p>
Item 3	<p>Group Discussion: Develop Approaches and Strategies for Addressing Issues</p>
	<p>In addressing operational losses, participants reviewed the proposed definition in the DRAFT Program. The definition that is currently provided focuses only on individual animals, not the populations and habitat that are affected by the daily operations of the hydrosystem. The WAC recommended that the definition for operational losses should include “wildlife habitat” (i.e., direct wildlife and wildlife habitat should be addressed).</p> <p>To evaluate potential approaches to address operational losses, the participants wanted to know how BPA addressed operational losses relative to the Willamette Agreement. Philip Key provided an overview of the process that BPA and ODFW used for addressing operational losses. Philip indicated that they evaluated different approaches including the method being developed by the KTOI. In the end, BPA and ODFW agreed to rely on ODFW’s biologists to provide a “best professional estimate” of operational effects above pool elevation.</p> <p>The difficulties associated with addressing wildlife operational losses are recognized by the NPCC and are referenced in the DRAFT Program. In addition, the NPCC recognizes the progress that has been made through the pilot project on the Kootenai River. In the DRAFT Program, the NPCC proposes that the WAC examine the existing options and alternatives for providing mitigation for wildlife operational losses and to provide a recommendation to NPCC, for resolving the issue, by October 1, 2015.</p> <p>Norm Merz provided an update relative to the KTOI/MFWP Kootenai River project that the NPCC has identified as the potential base methodology (Index of Biological Integrity) for the rest of the basin. Norm indicated that they are preparing to evaluate the transferability of the model (i.e., whether it will work for other river systems). To test the model beyond the Kootenai River, the KTOI and MFWP have decided to evaluate the model and whether the relationships can be applied to the Flathead River. Norm indicated that if all goes as planned,</p>

	<p>the Flathead River run/results will be available later this year.</p> <p>Although the participants acknowledged the utility of the model for the Kootenai River, concerns were expressed relative to whether it could be transferred to other basins besides the Flathead. Participants questioned whether a pilot study should be conducted on a larger downriver system, as it will have different issues that must be addressed. Participants suggested that good alternative test cases must be identified and potential prioritized. The participants also questioned how to translate functional impact to mitigation. Norm indicated that they are in the process of developing the translation.</p>
Item 4	Develop Workplan and Schedules for Completing Operational Losses Recommendations
	A specific workplan and schedule were not developed for completing the Operational Losses recommendations.
Item 5	Next Steps and Other Issues
	The participants were presented with the following question: Where do we go relative to evaluating operational losses? The participants agreed that there may be the need for new methods to assess operational losses that incorporate the results of the ongoing pilot project. These methods could include technical testing and evaluation of operational loss models and methodologies, or other alternative habitat evaluation models. Before the losses can be evaluated, the participants identified several issues that must be addressed (Attachment 2).
Item 6	Next Operational Losses Subcommittee Meeting
	<p style="text-align: center;">HEP Subcommittee Meeting July 10, 2014 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (Pacific) Portland, OR NPCC Office</p>

ATTACHMENT 2

ISSUES						
Transfer to Mitigation (land ownership)	Timing	RFP characterize hydrosystem systemwide	Off-site mitigation	Relationship to fish mitigation	Transferability	
					Other systems	Other systems with bird data/hydrological data
						Identify potential projects
Methods						
IBI	CHAP					
Conduct a side-by-side comparison. Tom O’Neill will provide a CHAP presentation prior to the next meeting						