

Pend Oreille Basin Commission Meeting MINUTES

November 15, 2012 from 9 am until 12 pm

Dover City Hall 699 Lakeshore Avenue Dover, Idaho 83825

Commissioner's present: Ford Elsaesser, Linda Mitchell, Brent Baker, Craig Hill, Doug Conde, Rick Donaldson (standing in for Ben Conard), Erin Mader (Coordinator)

38 in audience

9:25 am – Commence meeting

Ford Elsaesser welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Board voted to accept the 10/5/12 Minutes. Brent made the motion and Linda seconded it.

Andy Dux [Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG)] gave an update on the Pend Oreille Fishery.

Andy stated that as of 2011 there was an eighty percent decline in adult lake trout in Lake Pend Oreille(LPO). Less fish are being caught and netted as the population has declined. Lake trout suppression is showing success.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game's (IDFG) goal for rainbow trout in LPO is to offer more big fish as kokanee numbers recover. The bounty on rainbow trout from the Angler Incentive Program(AIP) is being removed in 2013 as the catch rate never exceeded 30% which did not impact the population. IDFG considers the rainbow population as stable and will now manage it for trophy fishing.

Kokanee numbers have increased dramatically with 2012 counts being comparable to 1996 for ages 1 through 5 combined. The number of spawners was a little lower than last year which was predictable because these adults were born in 2007 which was the lowest kokanee numbers recorded in LPO. IDFG has reopened the kokanee fishery for the 2013 season with a six fish limit.

The bull trout population has remained stable throughout the years even with the increased stressors from lake trout.

Questions led to these points:

- There continues to be a \$15 bounty on lake trout.
- IDFG is currently studying zooplankton populations and dynamics in LPO.
- IDFG does not believe that the yearly flush of the top 11 feet of LPO impacts zooplankton populations.
- IDFG is continuing to look at other methods for evaluating the effects of winter lake levels on kokanee populations.

Kathy Cousins (IDFG) presented on the Clark Fork Delta restoration project scheduled to begin next winter.

Kathy talked about the importance of the delta habitat as it provides connectivity between the uplands and the lowlands; it provides nutrients for the system; it increases water quality; it is important for human recreation and tribal use.

Kathy discussed the possible funding sources for the project. She listed Albeni Falls Dam Wildlife Mitigation for losses due to construction/inundation and for operational losses (57 years of rise and fall of water levels out of the natural cycle) as a possible source because these activities have caused an estimated ten to twelve acres of erosion to the delta a year. The Avista Clark Fork Settlement for impacts from the dams above LPO is also a possible source of funding because these upstream dams reduce natural delivery of woody debris and sediment to the delta.

Kathy talked about the Park River Delta restoration project that began in 2008. This project was funded through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act which provided no mitigation credits to Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). The projects have many similarities including winter weather conditions, access issues, and some of the same techniques are planned for use. This is the final year of evaluation of the project and much has been learned to apply to Clark Fork Delta project.

The major goals of the Clark Fork project are to protect delta shorelines from erosion; protect existing island areas and create protective “barrier” islands; raise submerged delta islands to restore historic habitat; increase wetland habitat diversity; capture woody debris and encourage sediment deposition in the delta area. Kathy stated that IDFG is focused on listening to the needs of all users of the delta.

Questions led to these points:

- The geotube that was used in the Park River Delta restoration was designed to last 20-30 years in marine environments and is not toxic.
- The total cost for the project is not known, but it is greater than six million dollars. Funds from the agreement between BPA and the State of Idaho for the Flexible Winter Pool Operations at Albeni Falls Dam will be available for use.
- Prior to 1951 and the building of Albeni Falls Dam the lake level went up in the spring due to winter run-off, but then it rapidly decreased which allowed shoreline vegetation to grow during the summer. Sediment deposited around the vegetation and islands were stabilized by the vegetation. The operation of the dam holds the lake level up through the summer which has killed off most of the vegetation in the delta leaving the land open to rapid erosion.

Joe Maroney and Ray Entz presented on the Natural Resource Department of the Kalispel Tribe and answered questions about the Kalispel MOA.

The Kalispel Tribe historically ranged throughout the entire Pend Oreille Basin and depended heavily on the aquatic resources, including bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout, in the basin. In 1914 they were given 4700 acres around Usk, Washington. The Tribe currently has 400 enrolled members and 30 to 50 employees depending on the season. In 1992 they reorganized the Tribal Departments and developed the Natural Resource Department (NRD). The main goals of the NRD were to increase habitat connectivity, improve status of native species, and improve human interactions in the ecosystem. The

Tribe has worked on forming partnerships in the region so they can benefit the whole region for the benefit of their little area. The NRD believes the keys to success are fostering relationships, relying on sound data, focusing on mutual benefits, and building from successes.

Questions led to these points:

Currently the Tribe is going through the process, with the Army Corps, of modeling the impacts of adding water to the flows of the Pend Oreille River below Albeni Falls Dam. They agreed to work together to see what might or might not benefit bull trout. The idea for this project came because the Pend Oreille River is listed as impaired for temperature and they are in the early stages of mitigating for this listing. The first opportunity to test flow manipulations could have been this fall, but the conditions were not right. Albeni Falls Dam has no way to pull cooler, deeper water from the river.

It was recommended that there be more communication with the local Idaho Counties and that there should be economic impact modeling for the communities on Lake Pend Oreille.

Craig Brengle from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) talked about the temperature modeling and other aspects of the MOA with Kalispel Tribe.

The temperature modeling is part of the MOA signed between the Kalispel Tribe, USACE, BPA, and the Bureau of Reclamation. This MOA involves a much larger area than just Lake Pend Oreille. The draft of the MOA was released for comment in June 2011 and was signed in June of 2012. According to the MOA the USACE will evaluate fish passage at Albeni Falls Dam for bull trout and model (and possibly test) the impacts of releasing water from the Dam earlier (then the Sept. 15th date that has been the recent practice) on river temperatures.

Craig explained the three phases of the temperature modeling study. Phase 1 includes computer modeling of releases from Albeni Falls Dam. Phase 2 includes deciding what cubic feet to release and “experimental post-Labor Day” releases (if Phase 1 models show benefit from the release). Phase 3 evaluates pre-Labor Day releases. This would require a change in operation of Albeni Falls Dam which would be a large process with a public comment period. Data from 2005 and 2006 flows is being used for the modeling.

Questions led to these points:

- At this time of year temperatures are virtually the same above and below the Dam in the river. The Dam is generally just letting water go through because of the low flows.
- Manipulation of water release has been successful in lowering temperatures on other rivers.
- Historic temperatures (pre-dam) would have also gotten high on the river, but fish were not blocked by the dam and could seek out more cold water refugia.
- Dams increase water temperature throughout the system by stagnating water in reservoirs and removing riparian vegetation.

- The listed temperature for bull trout habitat is 18 degrees Celsius. The river often has temperatures in the 25 degrees realm in late summer. It would be unachievable to reach 18 degrees but even 23 degrees would be better for fish.
- Modeling will evaluate all changing flows on all dates and then the tests will be done according to the results from the modeling. The models will not bring other factors (such as shade) into consideration.
- A number of fish passage methods are currently being evaluated including a fish ladder, fish trapping and hauling, and an elevator.

The presentation from BPA was postponed until another meeting because of a lack of time.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 PM.