

Pend Oreille Basin Commission Meeting MINUTES- FINAL

April 22, 2013 from 10 am until 1 pm

Dover City Hall 699 Lakeshore Avenue Dover, Idaho 83825

Commissioner's present: Ford Elsaesser, Marc Brinkmeyer, Brent Baker, Craig Hill, Ben Conard, Erin Mader (Coordinator)

29 in audience

10:10 am – Commence meeting

Ford Elsaesser welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Board voted to accept the 11/15/12 Minutes. Craig made the motion and Marc seconded it.

Patrick Stone (via teleconference), Senior Fisheries Biologist for Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, presented on the impacts of Asian clams on Lake Tahoe and treatment methods currently being used.

Pat explained that Lake Tahoe is an oligotrophic (low-nutrient) system and this factor has really intensified the impact of Asian clams on the lake. The clams decrease macroinvertebrate and native fish species diversity. They have caused some algal blooms by increasing nutrient levels during their biannual die-off. Drinking water drawn from the Lake Tahoe is filtered, but not treated. Algal blooms increase the risk of waterborne illnesses and therefore could lead to increased water costs because water treatment may be needed in the future. Asian clam beds increase calcium content in the water which creates excellent habitat for quagga and zebra mussels. Clam shells litter the beaches and there is a recognizable change in water color in Lake Tahoe as a result of the clams.

Asian clams were first found on the south shore of Tahoe in 2002. In 2009 Asian clams had infested Emerald Bay and in 2011 eradication efforts began there. The infestation there covers about 5.5 acres. The eradication efforts include suction removal, non-permeable bottom barriers, augmented barriers (include organic material to use up oxygen quicker), and exploring some new technologies. The suction removal has worked, but was inefficient because it also picked up a lot of other material. Barriers were effective in killing clams in one month in the summer and three months in the winter. They were not effective in complex sized substrates. One of the new technologies being explored is a suction device that separates clams from other substrate based on weight. In the future they would like to use the methods that have proven effective and efficient in Emerald Bay in other sections of the lake. They currently employ volunteer efforts to remove shells from the beaches.

Tahoe has an extensive inspection program in which all boats are inspected. Each launch has a gate that is manned with an inspector. They use a seal between boats and their trailers to show that a boat has either not launched since leaving Tahoe or that it has been inspected.

Tom Woolf, Idaho Department of Agriculture (ISDA), gave an update on aquatic invasive species(AIS).

Tom went over the AIS projects from 2012. He said that there was a 27 acre treatment in Perch Bay and diver dredging at the Windbag on Lake Pend Oreille (LPO). There was hand-removal in Priest Lake in 2012 and 70 acres were treated in Cocolalla Lake.

The 2013 AIS treatment plan for LPO should be ready by June. ISDA is coordinating with Bonner County for the treatment plan. ISDA, in coordination with City of Sandpoint, is looking at testing new biodegradable barriers on milfoil in the Windbag. ISDA is working with federal agencies to get a permit in place for non-permeable barrier use for the treatment of Asian clams in Ellisport Bay.

Flowering rush has been aggressively moving through the Pend Oreille waterways and down into the Columbia River with huge population increases from 2007 until 2012. Hand removal efforts in the Windbag over the last 3 years have shown some about a sixty percent reduction in established plants. Continued success with managing the rush will take indefinite persistence. Quagga and zebra mussel prevention efforts endure. ISDA continues to take veliger tows throughout the state each month looking for new infestations of mussels. No infestations have been found to date. There were 57 mussel infested boats caught at inspection stations last years and five so far in 2013.

Tom pointed out that all new docks that are permitted, and are coming from other waterbodies, are inspected. Tom gave a little background on Asian clams. He explained that clams have been found up to 25' deep in LPO and up to 200' in Tahoe although they cannot reproduce at those depths. He hypothesized that the clams in Ellisport Bay probably came off of a boat that was previously downriver of Albeni Falls Dam.

Rep. Eric Anderson gave an impromptu update on aquatic invasive species at an Idaho legislative level.

This year the state of Montana set aside an annual allotment of 1.5 million dollars for inspection stations. Milfoil dollars directed to ISDA in the amount of \$900,000 a year will now be ongoing for Idaho.

Rep. Anderson explained that one million dollars were allocated to the US Fish and Wildlife Service last year to inspect and decontaminate boats at federally managed waterbodies, particularly Lake Mead, in attempt to control the spread of invasive mussels to other waterbodies. He stated his frustration that there was little impact from these dollars once they were split up and spread so thinly around to numerous waterbodies. Lake Mead's mussel population is now so large that any cup of water pulled from the lake will contain live veligers. This means that any bilge water coming from Lake Mead will probably have living mussels in it!

He made the point that this fight against the spread of mussels needs to be a regional effort. Idaho alone cannot keep mussels out of Idaho waters. He was happy to say that he now has counterparts in many other states. He also pointed out that Idaho law allows local jurisdiction to demand that all boats must be inspected before entering a waterbody, but then they must locate the funds to enforce this law.

Beth Coffley, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Seattle Office, and Deane Osterman, Kalispel Tribe Natural Resources Department, gave an update on temperature modeling for late summer pool releases to increase bull trout survivability downstream of Albeni Falls Dam.

Modeling is currently evaluating small drawdowns during the weekdays after Labor Day and then increasing the pool for the weekend. Deane commented that there may be opportunity to rapidly cool the river when a cool weather system moves through during a warm weather year. A few degrees of cooling would benefit native fish. Deane pointed out that not a single tagged fish that has come from upstream of Albeni Falls Dam has survived through the year. So far it appears that the drop in water levels would be small, mostly a couple inches.

Beth said that the modeling is first looking at top half foot 2062.5' to 2062' for impacts and then they will look at 2061.5' to 2062'. It is likely that this year's management will be the same as usual. USACE will get in touch with the Commission when modeling is actively putting out results. Sequestration will not impact this modeling or the operations division of the dams.

Bill Maslen, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), gave a presentation on Albeni Falls Dam operations and BPA fish and wildlife mitigation responsibilities.

Bill went over the typical yearly lake levels on LPO as operated by Albeni Falls Dam. He then explained that the legal drivers for BPA's fish and wildlife mitigation responsibilities are the Endangered Species Act and the 1980 Northwest Power Act. He explained that the Fish Accords were a development due to dissatisfaction on reaching goals through litigation. The Accords allow for shared understanding of expectations, partnerships, multiyear certainty of money, and they leverage cost sharing opportunities.

BPA has an expense budget of about \$250 million a year for fish and wildlife mitigation in the Columbia River system. He pointed out that if it were not for fish and wildlife responsibilities costs for power users would be 25% - 30% lower.

Money for mitigation follows an "all-H strategy." The first focus is on improvements to the hydrosystem to benefit fish and wildlife. The second focus is on hatchery efforts. The third focus is on habitat improvements including acquisitions and the fourth is improvements in harvest methods. The last focus is on managing predators. On average 80 to 100 million dollars per year are spent on dam improvements. BPA administers about 800 contracts on 500 projects a year. This information is available at cbfish.org.

Bill talked about mitigation project local to Albeni Falls Dam. As of 2011, 14,076 acres were protected with \$36 million in land acquisitions. He explained that there are 3 million dollars available to begin the Clark Fork Delta restoration, but that BPA will not be the sole funder of this project. Idaho and the Tribes continue discussions with BPA about an agreement or settlement for Albeni Falls. He also explained that work in the delta will not happen this year because of NEPA permitting and that the winter level for 2013 is now uncertain.

Elliot Reams, University of Idaho graduate student, presented on changes in thermal stratification on Lake Pend Oreille (LPO).

Elliot explained the process of thermal stratification in lakes and that once stratified the conditions are beneficial for kokanee. The length of time that Lake Pend Oreille is stratified is getting shorter at the rate of about 2 days a year in the most impacted parts of the lake. He then explained that there have been air temperature increases throughout the region, especially in the winter months, over the last decades which would typically increase the length of lake stratification, but that has not been the case on LPO. He has been looking into factors that might be causing this decrease in lake stratification, but has not found any element that alone is the culprit. This trend could be extremely destructive to kokanee populations, leaving less food for kokanee as they rebound.

The Commission decided that the next meeting would be held in Clark Fork and would be paired with a tour of the Delta.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 PM.