

**Minutes of CRASC Technical Committee Meeting
January 9, 2002
Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center
Turners Falls, Massachusetts**

Agenda Items

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes from the Meeting on October 9, 2001

Mr. Jay McMenemy, Technical Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:17 a.m.

Mr. Steve Gephard motioned to approve the Minutes from the last meeting. Mr. Caleb Slater seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Mr. Duncan McInnes, introduced new Technical Committee member Mr. Gabe Gries, Biologist, NHFG.

2. Fish Culture Subcommittee Update

Mr. Ken Gillette reported on the successful use of hormones: most implanted kelt and sea-run salmon spawned within 10 days. Some bleeding and bruising was observed. Lower eye-up from the kelts has since been documented but this could be related to transportation problems. The genetic marking went well. Scanning each fish was time consuming, but manageable, though it was a problem keeping track of which fish had been spawned.

The total number of eggs produced in 2001 is 9.8 million domestic eggs, 173,000 sea-run eggs and 996,000 kelt eggs for a grand total of 10.9 million green eggs.

Mr. Gillette gave an update on water system improvements at the White River NFH. Construction is planned for the spring, with special funds set aside by Congress, to include eight circular pools in a recirculating system sized to rear 150,000 smolts. The plans call for replacing water pipelines, potential installation of a new well, and an improved isolation room for sea-run eggs.

The Pittsford NFH received emergency funds to implement a quick-fix to cover raceways and get a water treatment system in place by July. The plan is to first place pre-smolts on well water in April and then later (in July) to move them to raceways on stream water, if necessary. Vaccination of pre-

smolts will occur in March before transferring the juveniles from the White River hatchery to the Pittsford hatchery. The vaccination process will require the additional assistance of 6-10 people. Mr. Steve McCormick noted a concern about water temperature during vaccinating (too cold). He will consult with Ms. Trish Barbash.

Mr. Gephard requested a schedule and staffing projection from Mr. Gillette in order to ensure assistance for upcoming staffing shortfalls. Mr. Gillette requested pit tag injectors and additional personnel for the Fry Feeding Study. One person is needed to feed fry daily for one month. Mr. Roy offered to look into funding to cover this temporary position.

The Fry Allocation Meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2002, at 9:30 pm at the White River NFH. Fry production is projected to be down by one million fry in 2001.

The Richard Cronin National Salmon Station transferred 27 kelts to the North Attleboro NFH. The North Attleboro NFH is working on a kelt diet to stimulate milt production in sea-run males.

Mr. Bouchard, Acting Project Leader, Pittsford NFH formally announced the departure of Mr. Doug Aloisi. He noted that the Project Leader position has not yet been advertised. The White River NFH Assistant Manager position has been filled by Mr. Steve Jackson. The biologist position had to be re-advertised but is now on hold. The position at Richard Cronin NSS is on hold and the Roger Reed NFH also has one vacancy.

The White River NFH retained 850 '98 brood stock. Of these, 125 will be transferred to the Whittemore Salmon Station, 600 to the North Attleboro NFH, and 275 to Mr. Rocco Cipriano at the Leetown Science Center for research.

3. Fish Passage Subcommittee Update

Mr. John Warner provided the following summary:

HYDRO LICENSING

Holyoke Project

- The City of Holyoke Gas and Electric Department is now the new owner of the project, as of mid-December.
- The rubber dam/inflatable flashboard system has been completed and is functioning well.
- Tailrace excavation for the west-side entrance fishway is complete.
- Consultation has been ongoing regarding downstream passage operations in 2002, full-depth louvers in the canal, options for excluding sturgeon from fishway attraction flume, minimum bypass flows and evaluations, and the next round of downstream passage modeling studies to be done at Alden labs.

- Behavior studies of fish approaching Hadley Falls Station have also been discussed as being necessary to design an effective passage system.

Fifteen Mile Falls Project - Connecticut River - NH/VT

- The FERC issued the Environmental Assessment for the project in November 2001. The EA concluded that since downstream passage studies showed that salmon smolts moved downstream through the reservoirs and passed via spill, that PG&E should, pursuant to the Settlement Agreement for the project, implement fish passage by using spill when they are “notified that a stocking program for Atlantic salmon is implemented upstream from the project.”
- License issuance is expected this spring.
- As previously discussed, the CRASC should formally state the position that stocking is a permanent part of the program once the license is issued, and that fish passage implementation is needed.
- Implementation of passage would likely require testing of various spill configurations.

FISH PASSAGE ACTIVITIES

Upstream Passage

Eelways

The eelway at DSI-West Springfield was completed and has effectively captured upstream migrating eels. Additional similar installations are targeted for the first dams on the Chicopee and Millers rivers.

Ashuelot River

- The owners of the Fiske Mill Project (1st dam), Ashuelot paper project (3rd Dam) and Lower Robertson Project (4th Dam) were notified that with the removal of McGoldrick dam and shad and herring transfers, that upstream passage facilities will be needed at their projects.
- FWS and NHFG have asked for the owners to submit design drawings of proposed facilities - plans are due in January.
- Previous discussions on these projects have led to inquiries about the use of modified Alaska Steepasses in lieu of denil fishways. This has led us to look to Conte Lab to expand upon the research Alex did comparing these fishways to provide the information we need to accept these designs. NEFO is putting together a grant proposal and we are looking for additional funds to support the research, which will be expensive (~ \$200,000).

Downstream Passage

Cavendish - Black River - VT

The bypass with a flow inducer was re-evaluated again this spring. Formal results have still not been received.

Newbury Project - Wells River - VT

The project owner installed a smolt bypass structure this fall.

New Home and Cresticon projects - Millers River - MA

Downstream passage facilities for salmon smolts are in place at one Cresticon unit and under construction at the other. Facilities are complete at one New Home unit. The other unit is off line during passage periods until facilities are constructed.

Dam Removals

Ashuelot River

Winchester Dam (5th dam) is scheduled to come out next summer. West Swanzey dam (6th dam) still being investigated.

Mr. Mike Parker informed the Technical Committee that two dams on Yokum Brook, a Westfield River tributary in Beckett, MA., are scheduled for removal. Both dams are within walking distance of one another with one dam being in the center of town.

Mr. Alex Haro stated that his report (on the results of the shad passage work at Turners Falls) was not ready. He will provide a copy of his report to the Coordinator for distribution among Technical Committee members when it is completed. This year lighting at Cabot entrance and fallback will be evaluated, along with a low flow canal test.

4. Shad Studies Subcommittee Update

Mr. Caleb Slater shared concerns regarding funding for seasonal positions and the potential for significant staffing problems at the fishways in Massachusetts.

Mr. Slater presented a draft blueback herring management plan for the basin. Mr. Gephard announced that Mr. Rick Jacobson was working on an Emergency Declaration for blueback herring for the State of Connecticut. Transporting live blueback herring from coastal waters is permitted, but transporting blueback herring from inland waters is prohibited. This will close the herring fishery completely in Connecticut.

Maine did not collect or transfer any shad last year. Consequently, a plan is needed to get the targeted 1500 shad upstream this year.

It was determined that cooperators will need to coordinate and work together to ensure upstream shad and herring transfers this spring.

Mr. McCormick reported on sampling shad at Turners Falls and DSI. DSI had very low levels, and Cabot had very high levels of phytolactose which suggest fatigue. It is not known whether shad are fatigued by the Cabot ladder or by their time in the canal. These data need to be related to those from Mr. Haro's work at Cabot and studies on spawning success conducted at the Conte lab.

5. Salmon Studies Update

Mr. McCormick gave a summary (handout) of his Atlantic salmon PIT tagging study. Wild pre-smolt parr were captured by electro fishing and PIT tagged in 2000 in Paul Stream (91), Joe's Brook (246), White River (167), and Smith Brook (375). Detection rates at mainstem bypass antennas during the 2001 smolt ranged from 0 for Paul Stream to 13.8% for the White River. Detection rates generally increased from north to south. Pit tagged hatchery smolts were also released in the Passumpsic and West Rivers in spring 2001 and showed the same trend with the Passumpsic River smolts being detected at much lower rates than the West River smolts.

Tagged smolts from Smith Brook arrived at Cabot first followed by the White River and Joe's Brook smolts. In hatchery smolts, the West River smolts arrived about two weeks earlier than the Passumpsic River smolts. Date of stocking at a release site had a relatively small effect. The study is being repeated with an increased number of wild pre-smolts tagged in more tributaries last fall. Hatchery smolts will be stocked again in the spring and the bypasses will be monitored. An attempt will be made to wire the bypass at the East Barnet Dam on the Passumpsic River and the Bellows Falls Dam on the mainstem for additional detection data. Mr. McCormick thanked agency staff for assistance with electro fishing for this study.

Mr. McMenemy updated the status of the four radio-tagged adult salmon released above the Holyoke dam. One salmon reached the White River and was recently observed alive there. Two salmon spent the summer in the Deerfield River system. One tag has been stationary and presumed dead in Mill River (Hatfield). Brian Hanson added that they had detected one of the Deerfield salmon that morning in the lower position of the river and would be looking for the other salmon after the meeting.

Each Agency reported on fry stocking evaluations conducted last fall. Mr. McMenemy reported that VTFW evaluations generally showed increased 0+ densities but reduced growth from last year. Yearling parr showed normal size and survival. Mr. Gephard reported that evaluations done in Connecticut were highly variable. Mr. Roy reported the evaluations done on the GMNF also generally showed an increase in densities and better survival of 0+ salmon. Mr. Slater reported that density and growth in Massachusetts tributaries was good with the exception of a few small streams that were newly stocked this year. Drought likely had an impact on these. Yearling parr were captured at several sites where fry had not been stocked the previous year indicating considerable migration. Mr. Gries reported that evaluations in southwestern New Hampshire were consistent with prior years.

6. Congressional Initiative Update

The CRASC re-authorization bill passed the Senate and Judiciary Committee in the House and is now eligible for a vote of the full House. Language differences between bills will necessitate a conference once the bill passes the House - all expected in January. The next step is funding.

Mr. McMenemy, Mr. Warner and others proceeded to discuss funding priorities if the program is allocated less than the recommended \$9M. Mr. McMenemy offered to compile the comments.

7. Other Business and New Business

The Technical Committee approved Mr. Rocco Cipriano's Quick Response Study Proposals. It was decided that any additional information that was needed regarding these three studies, Ms. Jan Rowan would address.

Surplus brood stock allocation: Vermont - 200, Connecticut - 400, Massachusetts - 660, and 275 to Rocco Cipriano for research.

The Atlantic Salmon Assessment Committee Meeting location has been moved from Maine to Nashua, NH.

Mr. Gephard handed out copies of the draft American Eel Management Plan for the Connecticut River Basin outline. He will present the outline to CRASC to get buy-in before proceeding with full planning.

Mr. Gephard asked if there was any interest or need/desire to continue water temperature data that has been maintained by NMFS. There are three data loggers at three locations. The only cost would be shipping the collected data. Mr. Gries offered to continue doing the down loading.

The National Research Council reaffirmed genetic basis for listing the Maine salmon as a distinct population segment, thereby supporting the Endangered Species listing for down east river salmon.

8. Next Meeting Date

The next Technical Committee Meetings are scheduled for April 10, 2002, and October 9, 2002.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Special thanks to Darleen Cutting for taking the Minutes of this meeting.

Technical Committee Meeting Attendance

Jay McMenemy	VTFW
Steve Gephard	CTDEP
Rick Jacobson	CTDEP
Gabe Gries	NHFG
Caleb Slater	MAFW
Jon Truebe	Lakeside Engineering
John Warner	USFWS
Alex Haro	USGS
Bob Stira	Northeast Utilities Service Company
Phil Herzig	USFWS
Henry Bouchard	USFWS
Ken Gillette	USFWS
Darren Desmarais	USFWS
Cory Wright	USFWS
Ryan Mertz	USFWS
Darleen Cutting	USFWS
Steve Rideout	USGS/BRD
Steve McCormick	USGS
Christine Lipsky	RIDEM
Michael Parker	MAEOEA
Bruce Williams	USACOE
Duncan McInnes	NHFG
Ron Heun	NAI
Brian Hanson	NAI
Steve Roy	USFS