

**CRASC Technical Committee
Meeting Minutes
Turners Falls, Massachusetts
October 8, 2003**

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes from the last meeting on April 2, 2003

Mr. Jay McMenemy called the meeting to order at around 10:30 a.m. and adjourned at 2:17 p.m. Ms. Janice Rowan was tasked with addressing an immediate information need from the USFWS Washington Office regarding the CRASC funding initiative and was absent for much of the meeting. Mr. Caleb Slater, MAFW, and Mr. David MacDuffee, NMFS, were both absent from the meeting. Mr. Rusty Iwanowicz, MAMF, took early retirement leaving the MAMF position on the Technical Committee vacant.

Approval of the Minutes from the previous meeting was delayed until the upcoming meeting.

The agenda was adjusted to accommodate both a presentation by Dr. Steve McCormick on his research and reporting on the Congressional Initiative at the end of the meeting

2 Fish Culture Subcommittee Update

Mr. Mickey Novak, Chair of the Subcommittee, provided the following updates:

Egg production projections range as high as 10,843,000 eggs. Egg incubation capacity, considering current staffing and commitments of assistance at the White River NFH, is 10,200,000 eggs. Actual egg incubation capacity at the WRNFH is about 4.5M more eggs, but this requires additional staffing/assistance. The potential shortfall of incubation space is 643,000 eggs. This is potentially resolved if the White River NFH receives funding from the CTR/LIS Ecosystem Team for a seasonal hire. The Technical Committee recommended that all eggs be taken and placed in incubators. If staffing/assistance is a problem, the Committee should be notified to develop plans for further assistance.

Mike Masley, Manager of the RRSFH, took early retirement leaving that position vacant at RRSFH as of Oct. 1, 2003. Mr. Steve Gephard suggested that the Technical Committee acknowledge Mr. Masley. The Technical Committee agreed that a letter should be sent to Mr. Masley acknowledging his contributions to the program.

The Whittemore Salmon Station will be injecting sea-run salmon with hormones on 10/9/2003 with first spawning expected on 10/14/2003. Unfertilized eggs will be shipped to the Richard Cronin National Salmon Station for fertilization outside the building. Eggs from WSS and the North Attleboro NFH will all be shipped to the WRNFH through the RCNSS.

The RCNSS will be injecting on 10/10/2003 with first spawning expected on 10/15/2003.

The VTFW collected 153 parr that were transferred to the RCNSS for spawning. The CTDEP will also collect parr for spawning. These will be transferred to the WSS.

Egg banking responsibilities (incubation of 35,000 green eggs) have been transferred to WRNFH because of the potential for closure of the WSS.

The USFWS Regional Office funded vaccine for the PNFH pre-smolts.

The PNFH is still looking for assistance in marking and vaccinating smolts during the week of Oct. 20, 2003 particularly on Monday, Tuesday and Friday but could use additional help on any day.

The Northeast Fishery Center will be working with staff from the NANFH to spawn kelts. A total of 500 kelts eggs will be fertilized at the NANFH for this study. The rest will be shipped to the RCNSS for fertilization.

Mr. Steve Jackson requested selection of future smolts across the run rather than limiting selection to ensure wide genetic variability. Selection was encouraged to be made in two representative groupings.

Mr. Ken Gillette reported that the WRNFH construction now includes new working generators, a new boiler, and a complete re-use system.

3. Status of Whittemore Salmon Station

Mr. Gephard reported that the CTDEP has developed a closure plan for the WSS in the event that no additional funding becomes available. At this point, the WSS will spawn fish on hand this fall and assist the RCNSS with spawning but will not incubate eggs or maintain the egg bank for the program. The egg bank could be initiated if funding is made available quickly. However, the Hogback incubation facility has been disassembled and will not be operational this year regardless of funding. The CTDEP is looking at November as the point of no return in determining whether the WSS will be closed.

If and before the facility is closed, disposition of the remaining 250 adult Atlantic salmon will have to be addressed. The kelts could be shipped to the NANFH. The domestics and older kelts could be made available for research. Otherwise, they will have to be sacrificed.

Mr. Joe Ravita and Mr. Andy Murrett will be transferred to the trout program if the facility is closed.

4. Fish Passage Subcommittee Update

Mr. John Warner provided the following update:

HYDRO LICENSING

Holyoke Project

- Progress on implementing new license fish passage requirements continues:
 - Final Designs for Upstream Passage Improvements have been reviewed
 - New Shad Trucking system designs being finalized with input from Steve Gephard.
 - Settlement Agreement on outstanding rehearings, 401 and Section 18 issues being developed.
 - Downstream passage studies and implementation schedule still being discussed.
 - Bypass flow verification next week may lead to channel modifications

Russell - Westfield Paper Dam - Westfield River - MA

- Exemption application and a Preliminary Permit Application filed with FERC
- FERC is still conducting a jurisdictional review
- Current owner of the dam fined by MADEP for illegal dredging without a permit and fine still pending

Woronoco Project - Westfield River - MA

- Eel passage designs and smolt bypass plunge pool were not prepared as required -- FRC reviewing issue and determining new schedule.

FISH PASSAGE ACTIVITIES

Upstream Passage

Turners Falls Project - Connecticut River - MA

- Further evaluations of the Cabot ladder, and gatehouse ladder were conducted in 2003.
- Decision was made by Shad and Passage committees to abandon further evaluations of further modifications of Cabot Ladder.
- Misaligned baffles were discovered in the Cabot ladder that NU is correcting. These misalignments could have impacted passage success. Focus is now on installing an experimental new entrance on the riverside of the canal, downstream from the current gatehouse entrances.
- NU is developing designs for a floating and fixed experimental entrance.
- Discussions and designs of a new fish lift at Cabot Station were started but NU reluctant to move forward on this issue w/o further justification from and discussions with CRASC.
- Passage at the TF fishway was recorded on video and the counts for shad are not available yet.

Bellows Falls and Wilder Projects - Connecticut River - VT

Neither project was operated in 2003 because no adult salmon passed upstream of the Vernon dam.

DSI Fishway - Westfield River – MA

Volunteers from the Westfield River Watershed Association operated this project in 2003.

Downstream Passage

Fifteen Mile Falls Project - Connecticut River - NH/VT

- PG&E has responded to last November's call by CRASC for implementing downstream fish passage at Moore and Comerford dams. PGE proposes to install a smolt sampling device to collect data on smolt outmigration seasonal and diurnal timing and smolt abundance as a precursor to passage facility development. Ben Rizzo reviewing design drawings of sampler but agencies need to respond re: proposed plan and schedule for studies.
- The Committee agreed to try to provide comments quickly covering the concept, at a minimum; the response deadline is driven by construction limits.
- McIndoes bypass modified. Testing with hatchery smolts was done in 2003. Results due soon.

Deerfield River Project - Deerfield River - MA

- Smolt studies were conducted in spring 2003. Report due soon

DAM REMOVALS

West Swanzey Dam - Ashuelot River - NH

- NHDES soliciting bids to evaluate the dam removal and all other issues (historical aspects, upstream bridge, etc.
- Dam now in severe disrepair and NHDES may require impoundment draining

Fiske Mill Dam - Ashuelot River - NH

- NHDES working with dam owner on license surrender and removal deal

Others

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant - Connecticut River – VT

Meetings on the company's proposal to increase thermal discharge are ongoing.

Weston Mill dam – West River - VT

Proposal to operate a turbine for tourism is under consideration – this will present both up and downstream passage issues.

Investigations also going on for the Johns River Dam in New Hampshire and Lower Eaton Dam on the White River, VT as well as others initial planning stages

5 Shad Studies Subcommittee Update

Mr. McMenemy led the following discussion:

- No returning adult shad were observed by NHFG below the first dam on the Ashuelot R - this would have been the second year returns would have been expected following shad transfers for restoration there
- Shad and herring transfers:
- CTDEP transferred 850 shad to CT and provided 8 American shad to the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, CT for display there
- CTDEP transferred 225 shad above Vernon (Brattleboro)
- USFWS transferred 400 shad above Vernon
- NHFG transferred 1,000 shad to the Ashuelot R
- NHFG transferred 244 shad above Vernon (& lost an additional 200 shad on another trip)
- USGS-CAFRC took 101 shad for research
- USFWS captured & transferred 88 blueback herring to the Westfield R
- USFWS collected and NHFG transferred 47 bb herring to the Ashuelot R

6. Salmon Studies Update

Mr. McMenemy provided updates on studies:

Mr. Bob Stira, Northeast Generation Services, gave a summary of the smolt population estimate at Cabot and Holyoke and provided a handout. Smolt recapture study results: 1,176 smolts were marked and 31 were recaptured. Estimate of emigrating smolts: 80,322 +/- 42,140; the possibility of marking smolts from tributaries below Cabot was discussed for next year.

Deerfield Project - PG&E radio-tagged and released 4 salmon above Holyoke. One was re-captured at Rainbow, another was recaptured at DSI. Both were retained for spawning. One passed below the lowest monitor in the Connecticut River and the other has been between the Deerfield River and Cabot Station but the current whereabouts of both fish is unknown. *[One of these two-tagged adults was captured at the Holyoke fish lift on October 10, 2003. This fish was transported to the RCNSS for spawning.]*

Index site data is not yet complete - collection was hampered by high flows in VT. VTFW reported numbers near normal. CTDEP indicated that survival was high in the Salmon River and low in the Farmington River. NHFG saw results similar to last year. The USFS results were about average. There was no sampling conducted in Massachusetts.

7. Other Business

Fish & Egg Requests

- Approved Fish Requests
- Jeff Tyler, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, ATS bioenergetics study, 75 parr from WRNFH
- Angela Damery, Montshire Museum, ATS display, 2-3 10-12" ATS from WRNFH
- Terence Barry, Univ of WI, evaluating soybean meal in fish feed, 600-2-4" parr from WRNFH
- Steve Jackson, PNFH, ATS display, 150 surplus domestic adults from WRNFH
- Steve McCormick, USGS, physiology study, 1000-0+parr in Oct 2003 from WRNFH and 5000 sea-run eggs in Jan 2004 from WRNFH
- Gabe Gries, NHFG, Ashuelot R clupeid restoration, 1000 shad and 1000 herring from the CTR
- Vincent Pieribone, Yale Univ, lamprey nervous system study, 50-60 sea lamprey from the Holyoke fishlift

- Pending Fish Requests
- Mickey Novak, USFWS, replace raceway fish with 385 surplus adult barren salmon from WRNFH – approved

- Beth Goettel, SOCNFWR, obtain display fish for Discovery Center, requests 1 large salmon and 3 7-8” salmon from the RCNSS - approved
- New Fish and Egg Requests
- School programs this year – blanket approval for requests in CT, MA, NH and VT id the States have approved these requests.
- 3,000 surplus post-spawned brood stock available at WRNFH – of these 667 may be PIT tagged

CTDEP requested 400 – approved
 VTFW requested 200 – approved
 MAFW assumed to take the remainder (1733)
667 PIT tagged fish will be offered to RIFW

228 surplus post-spawned 98 year class brood stock available from the NANFH – all PIT tagged – *all will be offered to RIFW*

Stocking Report was made available. However, errors were identified requiring another review and correction.

- Number fry stocked: 6.99M fry
- Number smolts stocked: 81,456 smolts – this number was low and folks agreed to check for error.

Draft Adult Salmon Returns Report was made for Tech Committee review

- 42 returning salmon this spring + 1 additional fish sighted below Leesville, as reported by CTDEP for a total of 43 salmon; 25 females and 5 males at RCNSS

Migratory fish return count for the season:

- Atlantic salmon 43 (4 radio-tagged and released, 2 subsequently re-captured @ Rainbow & DSI)
- American shad 288,610
- alewife 54
- blueback herring 1,398
- gizzard shad 858
- sea lamprey 54,414
- striped bass 874
- American eel (juv) 25

Research Funding

- The Coordinator's Office submitted an SSPP funding proposal for genetics work - similar to past proposals to fund work by Ben Letcher.
- The Coordinator's Office submitted a Quick Response funding proposal for developing baseline genetic information on blueback herring.
- The New England Field Office submitted an SSPP funding proposal to look at the impacts of temperature on shad.

8 Research Presentation

Dr. Steve McCormick, USGS-CAFRC, presented information on his long-term smolt monitoring study in Smith Brook, a tributary to the West River, VT. He found a range of overwinter survival for immature pre-smolts from 28-75%. With mature parr, survival is probably reduced by 1/3. Almost all mature parr over 115 mm fork length become smolts, but no more than 50% of mature parr become smolts. In addition to spring smolt migrations, substantial fall movements of presmolts occurred annually. Over six years, most smolt movements occurred in late April and early May and appeared to be related to temperature but not flow. Most smolt movement occurred at night (83%). After his presentation, Dr. McCormick discussed the need for 1,000 one-year smolts for continuation of his physiological research. He requested 1,000 pre-smolts for fall delivery. The usual source is the WRNFH. However, they have had problems delivering one-year smolts because of a need for acceleration. A possible solution is to provide advanced feeding fry in June from the Kensington Salmon Hatchery for rearing at the WRNFH. Mr. Gephard will investigate this possibility.

9 Congressional Initiative Update & Budget Concerns

Ms. Rowan provided the following update:

- The USFWS is being funded on a continuing resolution through the end of October. There has been no feedback to the field stations on the 2004 budget.
- WRNFH did not have funds to fill the vacant assistant manager or biologist positions.
- The MAFW announced plans to close 2 of 5 hatcheries by the end of the year with remaining staff to be placed in vacancies at the other 3 facilities.
- The NHFG technician position in Keene was eliminated after the stocking season reducing assistance available to help pick eggs at the WRNFH this coming winter and reducing stocking and assessment capabilities this coming spring. A seasonal is expected to be available to help haul shad and smolts.
- The CTDEP expects to be able to haul smolts regardless of hatchery closure.

- The VTFW has instituted travel bans and other cost-cutting measures though most program activities have not been impacted.
- The USFWS Washington Office requested specific information on how the CRASC would spend \$500,000 and what would happen if the funding were not appropriated. Ms. Rowan drafted a response, the Technical Committee reviewed it, and the final version was forwarded to the Washington Office during the meeting.
- *There was some confusion about the DOI bill. We were misinformed that the Conference was underway. It will likely begin next week. We do not know who is on the conference committee yet.*

10. Next Technical Committee Meeting Date

The CRASC meeting date was changed from Oct. 22 to November 18, 2003. After CRASC establishes the annual meeting dates for 2004, the Technical Committee meeting dates will be set, usually 2 weeks prior to the CRASC dates.

Attendance

Janice Rowan	USFWS
Jay McMenemy	VTFW
Steve Gephard	CTDEP
Paul Pajak	USFWS
Jim Carroll	CRSA
Ken Gillette	USFWS
Dan Wong	USFWS
Larry Lofton	USFWS
Steve McCormick	USGS
Bob Stira	NEGS
Rosemarie Fisher	Volunteer
Warren Fisher	Volunteer
Phil Herzig	USFWS
Mickey Novak	USFWS
Gabe Gries	NHFG
John Warner	USFWS
Steve Roy	USFS
Darren Desmarais	USFWS
Bruce Williams	USACE
Maryalice Fischer	PG&E
Curt Orvis	USFWS
Steve Jackson	USFWS