



**Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission
Turners Falls, Massachusetts
Meeting Minutes
June 26, 2013**

Agenda Items:

1. Determination of Quorum, Approval of Today's Agenda & Minutes of the October 2, 2012 Meeting.

Chair Mr. Bill Hyatt called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

Mr. Hyatt opened the meeting, and the Commissioners and staff introduce themselves followed by the general audience.

The minutes of the last CRASC meeting on October 2, 2012 were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes from that meeting was made by Mr. Normandeau, seconded by Mr. Palmer, all were in favor.

2. Report of the Coordinator / Executive Assistant

Mr. Sprankle provided a handout and reviewed his report, refer to attachment for details. Item A., was the most current fish passage count data for facilities in the basin. It was noted the shad run was relatively good at 396,490 passed at all facilities and was partially due to low river flows in a prime time windows of the typical run and cooler water temperatures. A total of 81 adult salmon have been counted, with two escapees on the Westfield River. An additional salmon was reported for Holyoke and the Westfield at the meeting, bringing the current total to 83 fish. Sea lamprey numbers are within the range of normal variability, timing of that run was notably earlier than usual. The blueback herring count increased to 976 at Holyoke which is the highest since 2005 but is still very low compared to historic levels. Mr. Sprankle referred to a figure on shad passage at Holyoke in relation to river discharge and water temperature. He also referred to a table showing shad passage numbers and passage rates (from one dam to the next). Changes in fishway performance were noted for Gatehouse ladder (new entrance 2008) and fixes at Vernon Dam ladder in pre-season 2012. Mr. Sprankle reviewed a regional fish passage update (Item B.) which showed very poor shad numbers on Susquehanna River. The Hudson River shad fisheries remains closed, southern New England showed varied results in alewife runs, although some strong runs were noted, and mixed to strong runs of alewife noted in Massachusetts and New Hampshire and Maine. A summary of Atlantic salmon stocking in the spring was provided in a table which noted 1.9M fry, 107,704 smolts, and 410 age-2 broodfish stocked. A review of activities undertaken by the Coordinator since the winter was covered. Lastly, two figures were reviewed illustrating river discharge and water temperature from April 1 through June 26, showing the flow events, trends, and variability that all effects fishway passage efficiency and life history events.

Mr. MacCallum asked Mr. Gephard about what contributed to the relatively good passage rates for shad. Mr. Gephard replied lower river flows and cooler temperatures increased main stem fishway passage efficiency. He noted that the high early June flows may likely impact the success of the juvenile shad recruitment based upon previous research.

Mr. Bob Nasdor asked MR. Sprankle about fish passage on the West River (VT). Mr. Sprankle stated that the ACOE fish trap at Townshend was installed to trap sea-run salmon. This year no sea-run salmon have been allowed to pass upstream of Holyoke Dam and the trap will not be operated. Mr. Nasdor asked about any smolt counts. Mr. Sprankle replied that smolts are not counted on the West River. There are fall parr surveys to determine pre-smolt abundance that is adjusted for overwinter survival which gives an estimated smolt production.

Mr. Palmer asked about sea-run salmon releases in 2014. Dr. Slater replied that in 2014 it is expected that all sea-run salmon will be released to proceed upstream and a plan needs to be developed for this. Mr. Palmer noted concerns with angler captures of released salmon in 2014 if all fish are to be released.

Mr. Gephard stated the Salmon Studies Subcommittee will address this situation and develop a plan prior to 2014 and will consider angler issues, public outreach, etc.

Dr. Slater noted that not all fish can or should be simply released above a trap facility. The Westfield River would not provide the desired habitat unless fish were moved upstream of the second dam.

Mr. MacCallum asked if VT has brown trout so large as to confuse one with a sea-run salmon.

Mr. Lenny Gerardi replied the Deerfield River basin in VT has brown trout that reach this size, so for anglers in the region it is not unreasonable to have some identification issues occur.

Mr. Hyatt stated that the CRASC Tech will need to take this matter up and should have a report for the CRASC at its next meeting. If there are any thoughts, concerns get them to Caleb Slater.

Mr. Hyatt asked if there was a motion to accept the report, which was made by Mr. Palmer, seconded, and all were in favor.

3. Report of the Technical Committee Chair and Subcommittee Reports

Dr. Slater provided a handout summarizing information from the June 18, 2013, CRASC Technical meeting. For the Salmon Subcommittee he reviewed updates on the recent NASCO Meeting which included plans by Greenland (Denmark) to increase landings to 35t up from 20t and intention to start freezing fish. He reviewed some reported highlights from the US Atlantic Salmon Commission and referenced the web site with the annual report. The Fish Culture Subcommittee report was reviewed which included a table on Atlantic salmon egg take in the fall of 2013, eye-up rates, and distribution for each hatchery or facility. A total of 4.8M eggs were taken, producing 2.6M eyed eggs. The Fish Passage Subcommittee report was reviewed beginning with the substantial effort required by all the agencies, on the five main stem hydro electric FERC relicensing process (Turners Falls Dam, Northfield Mountain Pump Storage, Vernon Dam, Bellows Falls Dam, and Wilder Dam). The agencies have worked cooperatively with NGO's (CRWC, TNC, TU) and submitted 43 study requests. Many meetings have recently been attended on the companies' response to those requests, and resolving discrepancies. A verbal agreement with TransCanada had Bellow Falls ladder operating after 100 sea lamprey passed at Vernon Dam. The Bellows Falls ladder is only triggered for operation normally with the presence of adult salmon. A review of the status at Holyoke Dam and downstream passage measures (for shortnose sturgeon) that remain to be resolved were covered. The work has been repeatedly delayed. Other details are provided in the handout. Mr. Sprankle reviewed the Shad

and River Herring Subcommittee report with a handout provided. He reviewed river herring assessment work conducted by his office, with 501 blueback herring processed for otolith and scale reading plus 103 alewife and 315 shad. Samples were collected from weekly sampling starting in early April and ending the third week of June. In addition, over seven dates, a total of 2,931 herring (bluebacks) were captured and transferred to the Oxbow and Manhan River in Easthampton, MA. A final table summarized shad transfers to date from the Holyoke Fish Lift facility. A total of 2,123 shad had been moved as of the most recent update. A total of 680 were stocked in the Ashuelot River (NH). Refer to the handout for details on all these activities.

There was some discussion on blueback herring passage. Mr. Gephard noted he did not think blueback herring have different passage efficiency compared to alewife, but there is a difference in run timing (alewife early, blueback later) that changes flow and temperature conditions that may be present (favorable to unfavorable can vary in timing through a spring season for each species).

4. Discussion of development of a Memorandum of Agreement or Understanding among the four basin states and federal partners

Mr. Hyatt introduced the topic and reviewed that language in the CRASC legislation and found in the State legislation that is interpreted by him to allow CRASC to work with migratory fishes both in connection with salmon and independent of salmon. He asked whether the Commission would want to stick with the existing CRASC language as adequate or consider developing more specific language using an MOA/MOU.

Mr. Normandeau – it will be a different program going forward, so I support the idea. However, I am concerned with opening up discussion on the “Compact” given it will involve his legislature. An MOA would require approval of my Governor and Council and the Attorney General, and I am unsure what the political implications could be of opening this up for discussion at that level.

Mr. Hyatt – it is clear to me that no one wants to re-open the “Compact” as it stands, with the various State legal processes.

Mr. Normandeau - I would be interested in keeping this informal.

Mr. MacCallum – I agree partly with Mr. Normandeau. I can develop an MOA for Massachusetts like the one we have for the Merrimack River, but can also agree to continue as we are. The concern is this kicks the can down the road with the need to address still ahead of us. CRASC legislation will be effective through 2022 and it will be unlikely for renewal given our actions. It stays in place until that time, so either way we are OK. I do see the compact as clearly about salmon and ceding certain normal Commonwealth authorities to the CRASC.

Mr. Hyatt – assume we want to work on all the other things we have discussed today, other species and habitats, wouldn't that support our case when 2022 approaches to have an MOA, to keep the CRASC moving forward?

Mr. MacCallum – again for the Merrimack River, the MOA has been effective and in place for decades.

Mr. Bill Archambault – there are other models that have worked very well, examples include the Delaware River Basin compact and Susquehanna River Basin Commission. I see CRASC as

having lots of possibilities for the future, beyond 2022. An MOA could help later on. We have everything in place right now to continue the varied work activities and coordination.

Mr. Palmer – we need to continue to coordinate our work in the basin. We have many things to deal with including relicensing of main stem dams, fish passage, American eel, river flow. I am not so concerned about the development of an MOA.

Mr. Hyatt – so everyone says we want to continue to work together, do we formalize with an MOA/MOU or wait?

Mr. Normandeau – what about the contribution of funds and going forward?

Mr. MacCallum - that is a grant correct? It has an MOU we do sign on a schedule. We don't have to spend that money. Can we get that MOU circulated among us to see that language?

Mr. Sprankle noted that his office receives \$5,000 from each state annually through an MOU and the SportFish Restoration apportionments received by each state annually. The amount is agreed to via the Wildlife and Sport Fish Program through a five year "AFA" as the states have with their many other grants. . We are in the first year of a new five year period. The grant has been in place for 30 years, in 2013. An annual report for this grant is required, produced by the Coordinator, and available on the Coordinator's web site and sent via email to CRASC annually. Mr. Sprankle will circulate via email the recent MOU.

Mr. Palmer – the State of Vermont believes it gets tremendous value from the Coordinator and that annual contributed amount. An MOA/MOU is something Vermont could do, but perhaps another document would serve the purpose – perhaps a Strategic Plan for CRASC?

Mr. Normandeau – maybe a new path could be as Eric suggests using another document.

Ms. Weber – we are committed to this partnership and would be willing to do either approach. We can do an MOA/MOU if that is what the Commission wants.

Mr. Hyatt - the CRASC language and states anadromous fish, at that point in time, it was intended to be migratory, thus should in effect include American eel. An MOA could better define that as an example.

Mr. MacCallum – we can consider what Mr. Archambault has suggested and look at other examples.

Mr. McKeon – I can get a copy of the Merrimack MOU to the CRASC.

Mr. Hyatt – as no one is anxious to address this immediately, we will leave this matter on hold and will revisit it.

5. Future letter to FERC requesting intervenor status in five main stem hydro power relicensing process

Mr. Sprankle updated the CRASC that the FERC process is being handled directly by all CRASC member agencies with the exception of CTDEEP. However, CTDEEP has attended some planning meetings and provided input on these matters. He noted that "intervenor" status for CRASC will not become first available until April 2016 and at subsequent intervals. This status

will allow CRASC to be recognized by FERC in providing comments and responses in the process at critical points in time. There were some questions regarding what does this mean?

Mr. Dan Morris – what is the role of CRASC and the FERC process?

Mr. Sprankle reviewed some of the key past history with CRASC serving with the agencies to obtain fish passage, up and downstream in past decades through FERC and legal processes and agreements. It has been a coordinated effort via CRASC.

Ms. Weber – the USFWS will write a letter for this status as well, it gives the organization a seat at the table for negotiations and is a part of the proceedings.

Mr. Bob Nador – It will allow the petitioner the ability to intercede.

6. Vermont Yankee NPDES Permit Letter

Mr. Hyatt noted that a letter regarding concerns with the permitted cooling water discharge system at Vermont Yankee has been stalled. A draft letter, including revisions by CTDEEP and MADFW was enclosed in the folders. He noted the letter states concerns with the thermal discharge and entrainment and the need for more information on potential effects to migratory fishes in light of current information. He stated the letter was consistent with a previous letter submitted by CRASC on the same topics and he does not see it as controversial. He stated that the Coordinator would send the letter out via email for further comments and that he would then intend on signing and sending out to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

Mr. Normandeau asked about the State Of Vermont's status with Vermont Yankee.

Mr. Palmer replied that the current Governor has been vocal against the continued operation of Vermont Yankee and there are proceedings occurring including Public Service Board for a required certificate to operate.

7. Other Business

Mr. MacCallum stated he requests the Atlantic Salmon Program effort started in 1967 that is now in a closure phase, should be appropriately documented over its life span. He believes there would be value in documenting what we learned, obstacles that were overcome, research, etc. should be documented possibly like Larry Stolte did for the Merrimack River Atlantic salmon with his book. The public would be interested in that information.

Mr. Joe McKeon – we have a status review for the Merrimack River that covers history and is not a full book. Something along those lines may serve the purpose. There is also the US Atlantic Salmon Assessment Committee reports starting in the 1980s.

Mr. Gephard responded that there are some summaries on the program that would cover up to recent years.

Mr. Hyatt – so you are talking about chronology, events, actions, what we learned.

Mr. MacCallum – the public interest in this program is there.

Mr. Matt Carpenter – there are students that may be interested in doing this for a project. That may reduce the potential work load.

Mr. Archambault – we have had a student(s) at Hampshire College recently do papers on the Program.

Mr. Hyatt – well this is something we can think about until the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned approximately noon.

ATTENDANCE

Name

Affiliation

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Bill Hyatt | CTDEEP/BNR |
| Wayne MacCallum | MA/DFW |
| Ken Sprankle | USFWS/CTRC |
| Eric Palmer | VTFW |
| Robert A. Jones | CT Public Sector |
| Glenn Normandeau | NHFGD |
| Daniel Morris | NMFS |
| Wendi Weber | USFW |
| Duncan McInnes | NH Public Sector |
| Bill Archambault | USFWS |
| Joe McKeon | USFWS |
| Len Gerardi | VTFW |
| Caleb Slater | MADFW |
| Stephen Gephard | CTDEEP/Inland Fisheries |
| Bob Stira | FLPR/GDF SUEZ |
| Darleen Cutting | USFWS |
| Jen Griffin | Trans Canada |
| Matthew Carpenter | NHFG |
| Bob Nasdor | American Whitewater |
| Andrea Donlon | CT River Watershed Council |
| Eve Vogel | UMASS |