

MEETING SUMMARY

Hatchery Scientific Review Group Perkins Coie, Seattle, Washington August 23-24, 2000

Agenda: The purpose of this meeting was to discuss comments obtained from an informal review of the draft HSRG Scientific Framework; prepare the Framework for public review based on this input; test the ability of the Framework to fulfill its intended uses; learn about the Puget Sound and Coastal Washington Hatchery System; discuss the Benefit/Risk Assessment Procedure (BRAP); review example hatchery and genetic management plans (HGMPs); and discuss hatchery data issues.

In Attendance:

- HSRG members John Barr (and alternate Paul Dorn), Lee Blankenship (vice chair), Don Campton, Trevor Evelyn, Conrad Mahnken, Lars Mobrand (chair), Robert Piper, Lisa Seeb and Bill Smoker.
- Facilitation team members Barbara Cairns, Kathy Hopper, Michael Kern, BJ Mirk and Jim Waldo.
- Paul Seidel of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) attended the Hatchery System Overview agenda item to make a presentation, at the request of the HSRG.

Discussions/Presentations:

Jim Waldo welcomed Scientific Group members to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. He introduced Paul Dorn, who works for the Suquamish Tribe. Paul has been appointed as the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission's HSRG alternate. Jim said that during discussions of the Scientific Framework at this meeting, it would be important to confirm that Scientific Group members are comfortable with the sections of the Framework they didn't author.

Lee Blankenship led the Scientific Group in a discussion of comments received as the results of an informal review of the Scientific Framework. The agency scientists presented comments received from reviewers at their respective agencies; Lars Mobrand presented comments received from non-agency reviewers. Overarching themes included:

1. The Framework is well-written, scientifically sound, a good summary of pertinent literature, and presents the issues in a fair and even-handed manner;
2. The purpose of the Framework (what it is or is not intended to accomplish) was not clear to many reviewers, nor was it clear how it fits with other hatchery reform and Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance processes currently underway;
3. Many reviewers were disappointed that the document lacked specific recommendations, guidance, remedies or performance standards for reforming the hatchery system;
4. The level of detail needs to be balanced between the Framework's four sections;
5. It would be helpful to include illustrative examples and details;

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6. The Framework needs to address what conditions justify artificial intervention (i.e., hatcheries) in the first place and to look at hatcheries within the context of their watersheds, considering climate change, carrying capacity, cyclical change, etc.;
7. The Framework should acknowledge that there are tribal, social, cultural, economic and other non-scientific factors that are also important to decision making;
8. Reviewers are in general excited about the opportunity presented by the Hatchery Reform Project and eager to help.

In discussing these comments, the Scientific Group determined that it had not done an adequate job explaining to reviewers that the Scientific Framework was not the group's end product, but rather an important initial effort that provides the scientific foundation and justification for the specific recommendations to follow. The group decided to continue with the approach of 1) first completing the Scientific Framework as a summary of what is known about hatcheries; and 2) then moving on to providing specific recommendations about reforming hatchery practices.

In preparation for a public review process in September and October, the Scientific Group decided to revise the Framework's introduction to include a better explanation of its purposes, the history of the Puget Sound and Coastal Washington hatchery system, the twin goals of hatchery reform, the four conditions for successful hatcheries, and how the Framework fits within an overall "road map" for hatchery reform in Puget Sound and on the coast. The group will also add a table of contents, list of definitions and executive summary; balance the document's four sections; and incorporate all appropriate specific comments received from informal reviewers. The revised Framework will be approved at the Scientific Group's September meeting and provided for public review in mid-September. The results of the public review will be considered at the October meeting.

The Scientific Group spent the end of the first day working in small groups to incorporate informal review comments into the Framework.

On the second day, WDFW's Paul Seidel provided an overview of the Department's Puget Sound and Coastal Washington hatchery system. Paul explained that the hatchery system is over 100 years old. There was a surge of hatchery building and stock transferring at the turn of the century, a building and rebuilding boom in the post-war period, and a third surge—to increase fisheries—after the 1970s Boldt Decision. The Department recognizes the need to reconfigure some facilities. Because the purposes for hatcheries at the time of their construction were different, most are not "fish friendly." In addition, new regulations have been instituted since the hatchery system was constructed. The system needs to be brought into full compliance with these regulations.

Paul began to go through a document he had prepared highlighting the history, current programs, conditions and needs at each WDFW hatchery, organized by complex. He explained that there is no one document providing comprehensive data on the hatchery system, but such information can be gathered from documents such as Hatchery Operations Plans (HOPS), the Salmon and Steelhead Stock Inventory (SASSI), Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans (HGMPs) and National Marine Fisheries Service reviews. The Scientific Group identified the need for such a document as a potential research funding priority.

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Because the presentation sparked so many questions and issues central to the mission and interests of the Scientific Group, Paul was only able to get through three of the complexes in the time allotted. Paul agreed to the Scientific Group's request that he attend the group's September meeting to complete the presentation. A corresponding presentation on the tribal hatchery system will take place in October.

The Scientific Group reviewed and approved a memo drafted by Lee Blankenship that provides progress reporting guidelines to recipients of HSRG research grants. Lee will send the memo to the grant recipients and bring the progress reports to the October meeting.

The Scientific Group's Hatchery Data Task Team reported that it had been holding a productive dialogue with the developers of the co-managers' HatPro hatchery data management software program. The team will continue the conversation and is confident that HatPro will be built with the necessary flexibility to be useful to hatchery reform research. Team members will also review various agency databases and bring to the October meeting an initial list of data needed to conduct scientific reviews of hatchery issues and make recommendations about data collection.

Needing to spend more time working in small groups on the Scientific Framework, the Scientific Group decided to reschedule its review of example HGMPs for the September meeting.

The Scientific Group held a discussion in response to a request from the co-managers and NMFS that they review the draft BRAP document and comment on its utility as a tool for establishing hatchery compliance with the ESA. The group was uncomfortable making a definitive statement on BRAP, since they had been given such a short time to review it and had yet to receive a final or complete version. They asked the Chair to further explore how the group should respond. In the meantime, they asked him to draft a letter of response, for the group's review.

The Scientific Group discussed how the Scientific Framework fits in to an overall "road map" for hatchery reform. The group agreed that the Scientific Framework provides the scientific foundation for an Implementation or Reform Framework to follow, which will contain recommendations, guidelines and performance standards for hatchery reform. This second framework will allow the co-managers to develop planning documents containing operational guidelines, funding strategies, accountability processes and staff training for each hatchery complex, which the Scientific Group can evaluate for compatibility with the two frameworks and the goals of hatchery reform. Research results and monitoring and evaluation results will feed back into the system.

The Scientific Group decided to pursue putting together a document for the co-managers containing early recommendations on obvious hatchery reform items, while the group completes a comprehensive reform framework. One approach would be to pose two or three questions on three key issue areas at each complex and assemble the results into early recommendations. The group agreed to include suggested issue areas and questions on the September agenda.

The Scientific Group agreed to hold its September 13-14 meeting in Olympia, Washington and selected dates and locations for meetings through February 2001.