

**Minutes**  
**McKenzie Watershed Council**  
**March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019**  
**McKenzie Fire & Rescue**  
**42870 McKenzie Highway, Leaburg**

**Present:** Brian Brazil (International Paper), Bob Bumstead (McKenzie Fly Fishers), Lara Colley (Resident Partner), Darren Cross (USFS), Nate Day (McKenzie Schools), Arlene Dietz (Rice Family Farms), Daniel Dietz (McKenzie River Trust), Rod Fosback (NW Steelheaders), Emma Garner (ODFW), Chad Helms (USACE), David Kretzing (Resident Partner), Steve Mealy (McKenzie Guides Association), Karl Morgenstern (EWEB), Ralph Perkins (UWSWCD), Maryanne Reiter (Weyerhaeuser), Will Rutheford (Resident Partner), Wade Stampe (Resident Partner), Nancy Toth (EWEB), Kelly Wood (Wildish), Sue Zeni (Resident Partner), Jeff Ziller (ODFW)

**Staff:** Chase Antonovich, Jennifer Weber, Jared Weybright

**Invited guests:** Kelly Janes, USACE

**Public:** Approximately 25-30 guests were also in attendance. (The MWC did not keep track of sign-ins, though the USACE did collect some attendance information).

**1) Review and Approve Agenda**

Wade Stampe asked for approval of the agenda. All Council partners present showed consensus level 3. Mr. Stampe ask for introductions of Council Partners, staff, invited guest(s), and members of the public

**2) Public Comment**

No public comment cards were received.

**3) Downstream Fish Passage at Cougar Dam**

Kelly Janes, Environmental Resource Specialist with the US Army Corps of Engineers, presented on the Corps' plans for a downstream fish passage project. This presentation followed the release of a Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) that will be open for public comment through the 10<sup>th</sup> of April. The project is described as a floating screen structure (FSS) collection facility that will be attached to the temperature control tower. The USACE is proposing a year-long drawdown of the reservoir to 1,450 feet, a similar elevation to the drawdown that occurred in 2016. This project is planned to be implemented beginning in 2020 and continuing through 2023. The purpose of this project is to enhance downstream passage in the upper McKenzie River for populations of upper Willamette spring Chinook while increasing the genetic exchange of bull trout. Aside from adequate downstream fish passage, the Corps must ensure that this project allows the Cougar facility to meet flood risk management, temperature control, and dam safety requirements.

Ms. Janes provided descriptions of the alternatives considered for this project, stating that the Corps initially found 30 alternatives which they later screened down to just 2. Of the various alternatives, the only viable options as determined by the USACE include the floating screen or leaving the site as is. Comments to the EA can be made at [www.nwp.usace.army.mil/willamette/cougar/fish-passage](http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/willamette/cougar/fish-passage).

Bob Bumstead asked what the continuation of hatchery operations means, considering there is no hatchery in place at Cougar reservoir. Ms. Janes responded that the work will not change

hatchery operations on the McKenzie, specifically mitigation operations downstream at the McKenzie Hatchery.

Steve Mealy asked if there had been any attempt to quantify the increased survival rate of Chinook over current practices. He continued that there is a judge's rule related to hatchery operations in the McKenzie and that it's important to quantify the amount so as not to change the hatchery fish to wild fish dynamic. Ms. Janes responded that they do have estimates using the SLAM model to assess survival, as completed by their science center. She continued that this model gauges the performance of the structure and how that will factor into smolt and adult returns based on all effects on the fish. This estimate looks at the Willamette basin as a whole, rather than a specific number for Cougar.

A guest asked if there are plans to monitor temperature and turbidity. Ms. Janes responded that they will be working with the USGS to do that monitoring, and possibly EWEB as well.

A guest asked since the USACE is exempt from 404 monitoring if they plan to adhere to these specific guidelines. A USACE representative responded that the Corps does have its own 404 (B1) analysis that they use to determine certain parameters. Corps representatives asked that this concern be addressed in writing to be attached to the final EA.

A guest asked if the Corps has considered impacts to recreation since they plan to use Slide Creek and Sunnyside campgrounds as staging for fish screens. Ms. Janes responded that they plan to take over that area for the three-year window scheduled for project implementation. She continued that this impact is listed in the EA as moderate due to the other boating and camping sites in close proximity to the staging area. After speaking with the Forest Service, she continued, the Corps felt that these other access points capable of handling an influx of visitors.

A guest asked if there is an overlap between this project and the work going on at Detroit reservoir. Ms. Janes responded that there is no overlap.

A guest inquired as to whether this project will have a negative impact on the work being done on the South Fork below Cougar. Ms. Janes responded that it will not. She continued that the Corps will still be regulating flows, and performing flood control.

A guest inquired as to whether other federal agencies have looked into the possible alternatives and signed off on this project. Ms. Janes responded that they have worked with them, and meet monthly to discuss the project and get an advanced review of the work proposed.

Steve Mealy commented on the fluctuations of water level and how this has been an issue with floating structures in the past as seen on the Deschutes. A USACE representative responded that many other facilities have a much smaller range to work with and they have been attempting to address this challenge. She continued that this is the largest engineering challenge with this project and that the project has included a naval architect to help with the design. She concluded that this has never been done anywhere else and is a serious challenge with high head dams of this size.

Wade Stampe noted that volitional passage would appear to cut operational costs significantly, and then asked if predation would be an issue with the releasing of these fish. A USACE representative responded that they plan to implement a pipe bypass option into the design if they are able to determine that volitional passage is feasible. Additionally, they are currently working to figure out a safe and effective truck and release system although they are addressing release site predation in the planning.

Will Rutheford asked if they plan to measure the number of fish released and returning as a measure of effectiveness for the FFS. Ms. Janes responded that they have a team that specifically studies this, although the USACE doesn't typically make this information available to the public.

Jeff Ziller commented that ODFW has been a strong advocate for volitional passage since 2010, and worked hard to get it into this project. He continued that they've been working closely with the Corps over time, and are critical of trap and haul as they do not believe it will meet their criteria regarding 97% fish survival. He continued that ODFW has been advocating to get the two processes to come together and have volitional passage implemented into the design the first time around, so as to not to extend the timeline any further if it is found to be feasible. He concluded that they are strong advocates for volitional passage and not for trap and haul.

Arlene Dietz asked if the project is included in the recently released 2020 budget. Kelly Janes responded that she is unsure and that funding allocation is uncertain.

A guest asked if flow levels were taken into consideration. Ms. Janes responded that the study was designed around outflow.

Rod Fosback asked how they plan to get fish into a truck if the lake is drawn down. A USACE representative responded that they have naval architects looking into an amphibious vehicle that uses cranes and monorails.

A guest asked if the DEA states that they believe this facility to be an effective solution. A USACE representative responded that the DEA states it is the only feasible alternative. They are currently working through the process to address Jeff's idea of volitional passage but they are unsure of its effectiveness at this point.

Jeff Ziller commented that he does not feel that a trap and haul system would meet criteria given the information they have regarding how much stress is placed on the fish. He continued that it's a known fact that constraining these fish is bad for them and has seen no data in the past 10 years that would support 97% survival rates.

A guest asked what the survival rate is for adult fish in the Cougar trap and haul system. Mr. Ziller responded that it is high, but it's the younger fish moving downstream that is the problem. He continued that parasites are a huge issue and any additional stress only heightens that impact. He concluded that the numbers vary but he is convinced the mortality rate is much higher than 3%. A USACE representative responded that piped volitional passage does not appear feasible due to the lack of information on the subject.

Kate Meyers asked what screening process eliminated run of river passage. USACE representatives responded that it would require using the diversion tunnel as an outlet which violates the constraints of dam safety criteria, and also wouldn't meet hydropower, temperature control, and recreation criteria.

Kelly Janes concluded by asking that any comments be formally submitted to the DEA and that any questions or comments issued tonight would not appear in the DEA.

Wade Stampe thanked Ms. Janes for her presentation and all guests for attending the presentation.

Following the conclusion of the USACE presentation, Council members congregated to discuss a comment on behalf of the Council. There was some discussion of the metrics of a single statement from the Council versus the comments from individual partners. Interested parties were asked to formally gather at a later date to compose a comment to be considered by Partners prior to the April 10<sup>th</sup> due date. Jeff Ziller, Bob Bumstead, Steve Mealy, and Wade Stampe agreed to form an ad hoc committee to draft a statement for consideration by the Council.

Council partners agreed by consensus to adjourn the meeting due to the late hour and table the remaining agenda items.

Meeting adjourned 7:30.