

Pinniped Task Group – 6-13-13 meeting results.

Primary topic discussed was hazing practices and if everyone was following the current protocols or not. Although there had been some incidents where the boats were within 100' of fishway entrances, it was not often and not a sign of become lax with the rules. John Whitaker showed that the general trend for boat based hazing in the past few years is showing less pyrotechnics being used, which is the same for USDA dam hazers. Gary Fredricks was generally OK with the current restrictive zones and distances as long as they are followed, but he was not comfortable with the practice of trying to get cracker shells exploding underwater, stating this then became an underwater explosion. This is particularly a concern closer to the dam and not as much, say, 500' downstream of the dam.

The result was that CRITFC and the Corps (USDA) will reinforce the restrictions on using pyrotechnics with boat and dam based hazing crews, with a big emphasis on ensuring no boats or pyrotechnics are to be within 150' of fishway entrances. In addition, no attempt to shoot cracker shells under the water will be allowed within 500' of the face of the dam. Other than that, no changes to current protocols.

The group also discussed the BiOp requirements (RPS's 49 and 69) regarding continued monitoring. Funding has become an issue, and it will likely be necessary to reduce sampling effort in future years. Gary and Trevor both saw continued need for monitoring through at least 2018, particularly in light of the changing dynamics (Steller sea lions becoming more dominant). However, a reduced effort using sub-sampling might be acceptable, if predation results could be expected to be comparable to current estimates (say 95% probability of results being within +/- 5% of actual figures). It was also mentioned that there needs to be expanded monitoring into the fall/winter period, as we have done for the past 2 years, to not only monitor Steller sea lion take of sturgeon, but of impacts to winter steelhead populations.

FFU will develop some scenarios and present to FPOM for discussion/approval. We will also look into what we can do in the fall/winter with our limited funds and staff. From the Corps perspective, it would be nice to identify an end goal, whether abundance or predation, that could trigger an end to formal monitoring in favor of more anecdotal observations. We may also need to look into other funding sources, if the region considers this so important.