

DRAFT DRMT Hybrid Meeting Notes September, 2023

Prepared by William Habel, Clallam County

DRMT Members and Guests Present:

Hansi Hals (Chair)/JST, Shawn Hines/JST(alt), Powell Jones/Dungeness River Nature Center, Tony Corrado/Protect the Peninsula's Future, Montana Napier/Dungeness River Nature Center alt, Megan Uekker/City of Sequim, Lance Veil/Audubon Society, Tim Light, Scott Chitwood, Bill Martin, Jason Hatch/Washington Water Trust, Mike Auger/North Olympic Land Trust, Kim Williams/Clallam Conservation District, Joel Green/Streamkeepers, Bowen Kendrick/PUD, Ben Smith/Water Users Association, Joe Holtrop/ Clallam and Jefferson Conservation Districts, Holden Fleming/Clallam County, Danielle Zitomer/Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, William Habel/Clallam County

June Draft meetings were approved

1. Introductions/Review Agenda/Approve June 2023 Draft Meeting Notes/Public Comment

Dungeness Stream Gauges: 60.6 CFS at the Ecology gauge, 77 CFS at the USGS gauge.

June Draft Notes were approved.

Some discussion happened during this time relating to the drought conditions. Bowen Kendrick of the PUD mentioned that the PUD was having difficulties sourcing water, especially at the Island View Water System.

The June Draft Meeting notes were approved at 2:10.

2. Dungeness Drought impacts/response

Presentation 1: Dungeness Drought Impacts/Response (2:15) Megan Uekker- City of Sequim

Megan started by stating a press release had been sent out to the Sequim Gazette advising individual water conservation. Megan detailed some of the conservation strategies the city was undertaking in response to the drought. These included actions that were already being undertaken, including increased usage of reclaimed water on city parks and lawns, and working on distribution system leaks. She then went on to detail a deep well project the city is currently designing in the Silberhorn wellfield. Some discussion occurred over the infiltration gallery, Megan clarified that it is considered a backup source, and not a primary source of the city's drinking water. Tony Corrado asked Megan some additional details about the proposed deep well plan, to which she responded that the well was still in its design stage, but she believed it would be roughly 600 feet deep.

Presentation 2: Irrigation impacts/response and Pulse flow/Dry-lease projects Ben Smith and Jason

Jason Hatch detailed the dry year leasing and pulse flow programs. For the dry year lease program, participating irrigators will agree not to irrigate for 32 days, from Aug 15 to Sep 15. There were 18 forbearance agreements, which resulted in an estimated 10-15 percent increase in river flow (9 cfs) due to the non-diversion of the river. There was also a source-switch agreement, where a farmer switched source of irrigation from the river to their well, which lessons impact from mainstem Dungeness. Lesson

learned was that the late emergency drought declaration did not allow much time for planning/preparation, and they will provide this feedback to Ecology.

The pulse flow program was discussed as well. Ben Smith described the program involved irrigators turning off diversions at certain times to allow a “surge” flow to help fish migration in the lower river. Four irrigation turn-off events (13-hr shut down) occurred, one per week. Ben detailed each event, noting that they attempted to time things so that fish were moving with the surge at night. Ben reminded group of ongoing agreement that irrigators leave at least 60cfs in river and take no more than half the flow. Therefore, irrigators were already curtailing their withdrawals, and the pulse flow “bump” toward the end of the program was reduced. Even so, Ben was pleased with the program; cutbacks and agreements were doing a good job of keeping at least 60 cfs in the river. This is the first year they remember that no rain events occurred during the season.

WWT, Tribe, WUA, WDFW will be meeting in a few weeks to re-cap everything and discuss lessons learned for future.

Jason noted that obtaining funding was challenging and time consuming, and that Conservation District, Tribe, and WDFW, as well as Ecology, all contributed time and effort to getting the programs going.

Presentation 2: Dungeness salmon impacts/instream work and salmon survey status Hansi Hals/JST and Danielle Zitomer/WDFW

Hansi began the presentation by discussing the evolution of “Schoolhouse Chanel”, which has been developing in the restored floodplain since the dike was moved. Back in April/May, flow possibly split in half between the two channels meeting at Schoolhouse Bridge. Fish going up Schoolhouse Channel would then enter channel that was formerly Towne Rd, which also included a number of threads of water coming off of it to a wetland area. The Tribe observed some fish stranding in this area. In response, and in coordination with WDFW, the Tribe immediately worked to exclude fish from the channel forming on the former Towne Road, which would then force the fish to enter an augmented “cattail channel”, eventually leading to the mainstem.

These efforts were all occurring around the same time the State was deciding about drought advisory/declaration. WWT and Tribe shared concerns about chokepoints and drought impacts to fish with Ecology, ultimately getting Dungeness included in drought declaration.

Other drought response work included improving passage at low flow chokepoints. JST and Washington Conservation Corps used rocks to concentrate the channel in the center of the river to assist fish. Choke points are commonly present within the Dungeness when there is laminar flow and lack of large woody debris and the river spreads out and is very shallow in places.

Danielle then spoke about obtaining funding and authorizing emergency permits in order to facilitate the temporary channelization. Hansi then reiterated the benefits of pulse-flows for salmon in the river. This year was an excellent learning experience on how to better utilize pulse-flows during low flow years. Some discussion after the presentation was concluded. Lance Vail asked if there were water quality parameters measured during the fish count, which Hansi replied they had not. Lance emphasized the importance of water quality measurements, especially temperature. Powell Jones asked if there were better methods of counting fish vs an in-person count. Hansi replied they are trying to keep people out of the river, and a video-based counting method might be a solution. Ben Smith added at the end

that the majority of irrigation districts were informing customers they are not providing additional water.

Presentation 3: PUD water operations impacts Bowen Kendrick

Bowen began by showing some hydrographs from some of the local rivers, including the Dungeness. All were showing exceptionally low flows. The Morse Creek source was shutdown mid-August, as flow got below 25 CFS. The Hoko River has no snowpack, so without rain, there is very low flow in the Hoko River. The Island View water system, which is entirely dependent on Olson Creek rapidly went from stage 1 drought to stage 4 within a matter of weeks. Water then had to be trucked in, as the system's sole source was inadequate. Bowen was concerned with Ecology's slow response, it appeared they were unaware of drought in the west. Eventually PUD was granted emergency drought funding. The emergency funding will likely be used for water trucking equipment, in case of another severe shortage. Bowen then briefly explained PUD's drought response, including conservation declarations.

3. WRTG Follow-ups

Tony Corrado spoke to the League of Women Voters regarding the Water Resources Technical Group and possible presentation. The LWV would likely have a public event with input from the public in general. Tony said they have reached out to the Sequim School District in order to find a venue for such an event. The timeline was roughly the end of October, to sometime in November more likely.

The group then took a short break.

4. Other Orders of Business, Announcements & Standing Agenda Items

Powell began by announcing that the Dungeness River Festival had returned. Shawn announced the DRMT 35-year anniversary.

Steve Gray briefly updated the group on the Off Channel Reservoir project. He spoke about the new alternative plans, and that seismic studies are currently underway. The grant provided to the county has been extended to January 2025.

Rebecca Mahan spoke about the Towne Road open house, which took place on September 26. She also added that a contractor is going to start doing repairs on the levee over the next few weeks.

The possible October agenda included a tour of the Rain Garden at the nature center, and possibly an update on fish numbers.

There were no public comments

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00.