

Cedar River Instream Flow Commission

Final Minutes

SPU Water Quality Lab

August 6, 2014

Organizations/Members Present:

- Seattle Public Utilities -- Rand Little
 - Seattle City Light – Liz Ablow
 - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife -- Peggy Miller
 - Army Corps of Engineers -- Larry Schick
 - Washington Department of Ecology -- Buck Smith
-

I. Call to Order: Rand called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM.

II. Approval of Agenda: Approved as presented.

III. Approval of Draft Minutes: Plan to approve July meeting minutes at the September 3 meeting.

IV. News and Notes:

Buck reviewed the recent news and the court decision on Skagit instream flow rules. There is a concern amongst a number of people about the effects of the decision on recent land development projects in the basin and the potential for more far-reaching effects.

Larry reported that a Colonel Buck is settling into his new position in charge of the Hiram Chittenden Locks. Colonel Buck served as Captain here about 15 years ago and recently returned from an assignment in Afghanistan.

V. Real Time Water Management

Hydrologic Conditions: Rand stepped through the regular hydrologic packet for the Cedar River. Conditions are generally good in the Cedar basin as we await the return of the fall rains. Reservoir storage conditions are above average. Reservoir inflows are currently running just below median levels. 8-week moving average inflows are lower, nearing the 10 %tile levels, reflecting somewhat dry conditions in the upper watershed for the summer as a whole. It

is important to recall that during this time of year the absolute difference between, for example 10% and the 90% inflows, is not very large.

Instream flows below Landsburg have been just above the supplemental flow levels since late June. The bump in flows during mid-June occurred during the period of Landsburg forebay cleaning and therefore, no diversions. Actual flows for the last month have been running a bit below estimated unregulated flows. There were no downramping exceedances last month.

Overall, municipal water consumption has been similar to last year, but reflects the usual increases during warm dry conditions and decreases when it rain. Total Cedar diversions for the year are expected to be similar to last year and well below the current limits of the MIT/Seattle Settlement Agreement.

The group spent a substantial amount time discussing the most recent HFAM probabilistic projections for Chester Morse Lake elevation through the end of the year. The packet provided two graphs of the most recent model projections from Tom Johanson and Alan Chinn, one graph assuming High Normal fall instream requirements and the other assuming low Normal fall instream flow requirements. Both graphs indicated that, under most conditions, reservoir storage is sufficient to meet the needs of fish and people for water. However, the graphs also illustrate that, under very dry fall conditions, which are infrequent but do occur, we would need to mobilize the temporary pump plants in Chester Morse Lake. If the extended dryness were to be severe enough, we could face challenges for fish and people.

Buck suggested that it might be helpful to provide a 1-page summary of hydrologic conditions for each water year as it draws to a close. Peggy asked about the status of the SCL generators. Liz reported the repairs on both units are being addresses and should be resolved in the near future.

Rand distributed copies of the most recent "At Your Service" newsletter and pointed out the section addressing the importance of water conservation for protecting fish and streams. He was asked if the newsletter was distributed to wholesale customers. Rand said he would check to find out.

Lake Washington: Larry reported that the elevation of Lake Washington was currently 21 feet, an unusually high level for this point in the normal lake draw down season. He believes the residual effects of the recent wet spring have contributed to the high lake level. Bottom line, Lake Washington storage is currently in good shape. False locking experiments will continue through mid-September to test the possibility of creating a "synthetic estuary" upstream of the locks to help provide a cool water refuge for upstream migrating adult salmon.

Weather: Larry reported that we have had a relatively warm, dry summer punctuated by small rain events, which were substantial by summer standards, but small by wet season standards. Conditions in the tropics have not yet reached the established El Nino threshold, but they are tracking that way. Forecasters should have a better read by September, but best projections right now are for moderate to weak El Nino conditions later this year. The El Nino signal for the Pacific Northwest is primarily a suppression of arctic outbreaks; so major lowland snow events are less likely and there tends to be less flooding and less likelihood of major windstorms. However, these are trends, not guarantees. We can still see natural variability and exceptions to past trends.

Voluntary augmented summer flow target: Rand reported that, in recent discussions with SPU water managers, it appears that an augmented minimum or target of approximately 105 to 115 cfs at USGS gage 12117600 can likely be met again this year for at least the next few weeks with no significant impact on reservoir storage. Rand reported that he had previously discussed the matter with those IFC members not in attendance today, Holly Coccoli, John Engel, Randy McIntosh and Tim Romanski. All were supportive of maintaining the augmented target for as long as possible during the summer base flow season from August 5 to September 15. Members in attendance at today's meeting concurred and added that we should continue to monitor conditions. If hydrologic conditions deteriorate sufficiently to raise water managers' concerns, we could discuss the matter and consider lowering the target minimum flow.

Fish Update: The sockeye counts at the Locks are winding down. This year's return looks like it will be around 65,000 to 70,000 fish; well below the pre-season forecast of about 167,000. Chinook counts typically peak later this month. So far this year, counts are running well below the 10-year average.

VI. *The large lock filling culverts and fish passage at the Ballard Locks*

As directed at the last meeting, Rand distributed for signature the final letter to the USACE regarding support for replacement of the large locks filling culvert gates at the Locks. He reported that members not in attendance today were able to sign the letter previously. So, with the signatures today, the letter will be ready to go and SPU will transmit it to the USACE. All present signed the letter, completing the signature process.

VII. Supplemental Studies

For Study Topic 1, Rand reported that, this week Karl had assembled the Department of Ecology crew and was working with USGS staff to retrieve accelerometers. For Study Topic 2, Rand and Karl had completed the second and final day of this year's off-channel habitat survey. He reported that the

features in the lower river exhibited somewhat more change over the winter than in the upper portion of the river that was surveyed earlier in June. USGS crews have been collecting data from side channels in the Van Ness reach. They are finding the large side channel on this property to be particularly interesting and it appears to be supporting a relatively large number of juvenile salmonids. We look forward to hearing more later.

VII. September 3 IFC Meeting

- 1) Voluntary summer supplemental flow target
- 2) Peak Flow Studies update
- 3) Initial discussion of October High/Low Normal flow decision

Meeting adjourned at 12:40 PM