
MEETING NOTES
AUGUST 20, 1997

COLUMBIA RIVER OFFSHORE DISPOSAL SITE WORKSHOP
Fisheries and Biological Resources Working-Group Meeting

DRAFT
Meeting Notes

Introduction

On August 20, 1997, Working Groups 1 and 2 convened at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Portland District offices to continue discussion of fishery and biological resource issues related to offshore disposal options for the Mouth of the Columbia River (MCR) and the Columbia River Channel Deepening Projects. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss stakeholder efforts to collect information for preparation of overlay maps depicting fishery and biological resources. Representatives from state, local, and federal agencies were in attendance, as were individuals representing the crab fishing industry. A neutral facilitator, Valerie Lee of Environment International, led the meeting. Notes of the proceedings were recorded by co-facilitator Madeline Kass.

Opening Remarks

Valerie Lee opened the meeting by outlining a proposed agenda that included review and adoption of the first meeting notes followed by stakeholder presentations on collected overlay information. She also introduced co-facilitator Madeline Kass of Environment International standing in for Margaret Merrens.

REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF SUGGESTED REVISIONS TO MINUTES FROM MEETING 1

Valerie Lee suggested that the participants look over the redlined revisions of the minute notes from the first meeting and identify any problems or changes for review. It was determined that, except for a typographic error on page 9, none of the participants had any problems or changes with the revised minutes.

Consensus Point: The participants adopted in full the revised first meeting minutes, subject to correction of the identified typographic error on page 9.

UPDATE FROM PARTICIPANTS WITH TASK ASSIGNMENTS

Valerie Lee reviewed for the group, and put up on the board, the task assignments decided at the previous meeting:

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| 1. Benthics: | Kim Larson and Danil Hancock |
| 2. Juvenile Crabs: | Kim Larson and Danil Hancock |
| 3. Soft-shell Crab Distributions: | Dale Beasley and Kim Larson |
| 4. Commercial Crab Fishery: | Dale Beasley |
| 5. Trawlfish: | Dave Fox (locations of juvenile fish; if possible) |
| 6. Juvenile Flat Fish: | Ben Meyer, if available |
| 7. Razor Clams: | Steve Barry |
| 8. Marine Mammals: | Ben Meyer |
| 9. Sea Birds: | Kathi Larson |
| 10. Shrimp: | Christine Valentine to ask Dave Fox |
| 11. Recreational Fishery: | Christine Valentine to ask Dave Fox |
| 12. Navigation for Commercial Fishery: | Dale Beasley |

Valerie Lee asked each of the participants to update the group on the status of information collected on their respective task assignments.

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Eddie Beasley reporting on Navigation, Soft-Shell Crab Distributions, and Commercial Crab Fishery

Eddie Beasley/Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association (CRCFA) stated that she had no comment, she was there just to listen because Dale could not be there and no one else from CRCFA had come to the meeting. She did report that information for her tasks had not yet been collected and the information would probably not be available until October.

Follow-up: Dave Fox/Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) asked whether the CRCFA data would come from interviews or other sources.

Response: Eddie Beasley (CRCFA) answered that they intended to use surveys or any other way suggested by the participants, but that the collection would not be happening soon. She estimated it would be October before they could get together with the other fishers and CRCFA members. She explained that fishing would continue until the end of September, so surveys would not be out until October. She anticipated responses 2-3 weeks thereafter.

Response: Kim Larson (CORPS) added that the data collected would look at both fishing and soft shell crab locations.

Follow-up: Danil Hancock/Oceanographic Institute of Oregon (OIO) asked whether Kim Larson would be assisting the Beasleys.

Response: Eddie Beasley (CRCFA) responded that she would be o.k. with having someone come and help out and that they would work together with Kim Larson.

Response: Kim Larson (CORPS) added that he would help coordinate with the Beasleys to send out notices of interviews and have the fishers come in and talk.

Kathi Larson reporting on Sea Birds

Kathi Larson/United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) reported on sea bird information collected for the overlays. Based on conversations with other researchers, she reported that

- ✂ Terns and Cormorants feed in the channel out to Area F
- ✂ Cormorants feed on the north side of the north jetty (by Peacock's Spit). However, it was unclear whether they feed in Area E
- ✂ Terns feed on the south side of the south jetty, away from any of the areas (towards Clatsip Spit)

The key point, she concluded, was that Cormorants feed in and around Area B. She noted the possibility that the Terns were feeding out as far as area B, but had no information on how many, if any. She also indicated that she would contact Roy Lowe at the Oregon National Refuge for information on Brown Pelicans and Murres.

Follow-up: Ben Meyer/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) asked whether there was any information on Marbled Murrelets.

Response: Kathi Larson (USFWS) responded that Marbled Murrelets are more common in Washington State.

Follow-up: Danil Hancock (OIO) asked about data collection on gulls.

Response: Kathi Larson (USFWS) responded that none of her sources mentioned gulls.

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Follow-up: Rick Vining/Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) asked about the significance of Cormorants. He wanted to know whether the presence of Cormorants indicated the presence of fish and, more specifically, whether the presence of the birds indicated ease of fishing as opposed to concentration of fish.

Response: Ben Meyer (NMFS) answered that Cormorants feed in areas of concentrations of fish.

Bob Burkle (for Steve Barry) reporting on Razor Clams

Bob Burkle: Washington Department Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) reported, for Steve Barry, on razor clam information collected for the overlays. Based on conversations with razor clam scientist Doug Simon, he reported the following:

- ✂ Peacock Spit and areas north are erosion areas where razor clams habitat has disappeared and very few razor clams exist.
- ✂ Long Beach has had a very limited season because the numbers of razor clams are down.
- ✂ There are hot spots of juvenile razor clams all up and down the coast of Washington.
- ✂ There is very little offshore data on razor clams.
- ✂ Past attempts at transplants have been dismal failures.

Bob Burkle suggested that razor clams are dependent on their habitat and their habitat is not near the disposal areas. He noted that the important razor clam locations are accretion areas where sand is building up. He also suggested that because disposal of sand will not bother the razor clams, the information may not be as important to consider for an overlay map. He also indicated that an overlay could be made, but that no specific data exists.

Comment: Dave Fox (ODFW) added that there are major razor clam areas in Oregon with certain offshore areas considered major populations. He indicated that the major adult concentration/population for Oregon razor clams is at Clatsip Spit (??). He indicated that quantitative razor clam data is based on evaluation of catches--interviews for counts and locations--for catch and catch per unit effort. He suggested that crab fisher interviews could help with additional information.

Comment: Danil Hancock (OIO) suggested that the addition of sand may be a benefit for razor clams.

Response: Bob Burkle (WDFW) stated that the addition of sand would definitely be a benefit and a possible mitigation opportunity. He noted that the razor clams are now in a down cycle. He suggested that the person to contact regarding the specifics of how sand might effect the clams would be Doug Simons.

Based on these comments, Valerie Lee asked whether the participants wanted an overlay for razor clams.

Comment: Kim Larson (CORPS) suggested that if the group considered razor clams to be a concern, they should be mapped, and if not, they should not be mapped.

Comment: Dave Fox (ODFW) suggested that razor clams should be addressed in process because of the potential benefit of the project on the resource. He noted that the information for Oregon could be reported in a way that would be compatible with Doug Simon's data.

Consensus Point: The participants agreed to continue to include an overlay for razor clams noting recreational harvest areas and catch information.

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Comment: Kim Larson (CORPS) commented that Dave Fox could draw a circle on the overlay approximating the offshore subtidal and the inshore recreational catch areas.

Comment: Danil Hancock (OIO) suggested that genetic sequencing could be used to determine the relationship, if any, between inshore and offshore populations.

Response: Kathi Larson (USFWS) responded that such genetic information would not be necessary for the overlay process because what they needed to know was just whether the clams were out there.

Consensus Point: The participants agreed that although genetic sequencing information would be interesting to obtain, they would not pursue it for the overlay process.

Follow-up: Dave Fox (ODFW) said that he could put the best information they have on razor clam areas on a map.

Dave Fox reporting on Trawlfish

Dave Fox (ODFW) reported on trawlfish information collected for the overlays. He reported that his trawlfish information came from commercial fishers and that much of the information that he was presenting was the same as that presented at the first working group meeting relating to the mouth of the Columbia. He reported that:

- ✂ The small circles on the maps represent the starting point of the trawlers. The starting point is where the trawlers set the net. From the start point the trawl extends between 1 to 5 miles and fishing may occur anywhere along the line.
- ✂ The trawler information includes the net set point and catch by species, by weight, and by day.
- ✂ The ODFW enters the trawler information on a regular basis and can provide full year data through 1996. The data can be separated out and plotted by category.
- ✂ The ODFW data includes the same information for shrimp. The shrimp fishery, however, is out farther, usually greater than 300 feet.
- ✂ The ODFW information collected is confidential. This means that it cannot be shared or presented in a manner that would allow the identification of a specific vessel. He can provide gross data and combinations of data but not anything on individual vessels. For purposes of the group, this should not matter because gross data is what is wanted. However, the group may need to coordinate the scale of the overlay information.

Dave Fox reported that he could take the catch data and break out the information by date or other category. He suggested that large groupings of start points would suggest that the fish are nearby. He noted, however, that the participants must keep in mind that the mapped points do not pinpoint species locations.

Comment: Danil Hancock (OIO) suggested using density gradients for four year periods.

Follow-up: Kim Larson (CORPS) commented that all the information collected will be given to the GIS people to pull together. He asked the group what units should be selected.

Response: Dave Fox (ODFW) said that his data covers catch per unit effort for market species. Market species include any species sold.

Comment: Christine Valentine Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) noted that the market species data would not include data on juvenile populations.

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Follow-up: Stephan Chesser (CORPS) asked whether the time of year would have significance and if so, whether it would be useful to have more than one time overlay.

Follow-up: Kim Larson (CORPS) asked whether the information should be by season.

Follow-up: Edie Beasley (CRCFA) asked about obtaining juvenile fish information for areas given that the data would not include such information.

Response: Danil Hancock (OIO) suggested that species by species information might not be needed.

Response: Bob Burkle (WDFW) suggested that there may be species that are more or less tolerant so that species by species information might be of use.

Response: Dave Fox (ODFW) responded that there are several ecologically similar species. The four primary species included: Sand Dabs, Sand Sole, English Sole, and Starry Flounder.

There was additional discussion on whether the data should be broken down for different time periods/seasons and if so, how the data should be divided.

Comment: Ben Meyer (NMFS) suggested that they look at data for a full year.

Comment: Danil Hancock (OIO) similarly noted that the group might want to aggregate the data to start and then later divide by months or seasons.

Response: Dave Fox (ODFW) noted that the aggregate data was already done.

After discussion on the various proposals for trawlfish data collection, the group considered a proposal to use data on catch per unit effort per season, focusing on bottom species selected by David Fox.

Consensus Points: The participants agreed that the data for the trawlfish overlay map should include catch per unit effort by season (as defined by David Fox) with a focus on bottom species (selected by David Fox in accordance with natural breaks in the data set). The participants agreed that similar information on shrimp should be collected. The participants also agreed that David Fox would present the information at the next meeting.

Comment: Edie Beasley (CRCFA) reiterated her comment about juvenile resources. She noted that the consensus proposal still did not address the juvenile fish issue for mapping purposes.

The participants also discussed trawlfish information and data collection relating to Washington State.

Follow-up: Ben Meyer (NMFS) asked about the need for Washington trawlfishing data.

Response: Bob Burkle (WDFW) responded that the Oregon data were very similar to the Washington, except that the fishing vessels return to different ports. Otherwise, they all fish at the same places.

Follow-up: Edie Beasley (CRCFA) stated that obtaining the Washington data would be useful and asked who was in charge of trawlfish data in Washington.

Response: Bob Burkle (WDFW) responded that Brain Culver was the person in charge of trawlfish data in Washington. He also agreed to follow-up on obtaining Washington data similar to the Oregon data.

Following up on his report, Dave Fox reiterated that the trawling data should not be used in isolation. He emphasized that his trawling data should be used in conjunction with the interview information obtained from the

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fishers. He stated that it was essential to talk with people because the data indicated trawler start points and not necessarily areas where fish were caught. He also suggested that the fishers could provide information on the location of juveniles that were not covered in his data. He noted, in addition, a concern about potential impacts from disposal having nothing to do with fish.

UPDATE ON CURRENT DISPOSAL PRACTICES: THE BEASLEYS' REQUEST FOR MODIFIED USE OF DISPOSAL AREAS AND THE CORPS' RESPONSIVE ACTION

Valerie Lee asked Edie Beasley to update the group on the Beasley's proposal to the Corps and asked Eric Braun to present the Corps' response and action taken.

Edith reported to the group that Mark Siipola's July survey had shown less than usual dredge materials. Based on this information, they had proposed to the Corps that Areas E and F be used fully instead of Area B. The proposal led to a letter to the agency and a written response back from the Corps.

Comment: Stephan Chesser (Corps) reported that the Corps decided to Area E exclusively, and no longer use Area B. He clarified that the reduced spoils allowed the Corps to avoid Area B and crab and soft shell resources in that area.

Follow-up: Edith Beasley (CRCFA) asked about where in Area E the sand was going. Her concern was that the sand might build up and block small fishing boats. Specifically, she mentioned her concern that 50 feet was not deep enough and that they should consider 55 feet to avoid navigational hazards. She suggested that Laura Hicks' letter may have raised a similar concern.

Eric Braun reported that based on the Beasleys' request and the requests of State agencies, the Corps had initiated an internal review to consider the use of Area E, to evaluate the potential for navigational problems, and to look into what the Corps could or could not do contractually. The Corps found that they could re-negotiate with their contractor, save financially, and take pressure off Area B. Seeing all pros and no cons, they started the balls rolling to make the change.

Comment: Edith Beasley (CRCFA) stated that the Corps had made a real good faith effort. She noted, however, that they had not heard back from the Corps until the previous Friday and that their original proposal recommended use of both Area E and F. She reiterated a concern about the sand causing navigational problems, but indicated she would accept just using E if Eric Braun found it acceptable.

Response: Eric Braun (Corps) responded that there would not be a great shift in the overall quantities and that there would be monitoring to avoid mounding or navigational problems. Further, if a problem did arise, the Corps would back off.

Follow-up: Kathi Larson (USFWS) asked what the Corps would be monitoring.

Response: Eric Braun (Corps) responded that they would be monitoring to see if the sand stayed in place and that they were currently in the midst of a channel survey.

Comment: Edie Beasley (CRCFA) wanted the Corps to monitor how far North the sand moved.

Comment: Rick Vining (WDOE) stated that he was not comfortable with the way the Corps was corresponding on the matter. He stated that the Corps was not corresponding well and that he was concerned about communication between the stakeholders.

Valerie Lee encouraged the group to discuss the type and amount of communication between stakeholders that would be appropriate.

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Comment: Rick Vining (WDOE) commented that he would like to see more communication.

Comment: Bob Burkle (WDFW) commented that he felt the Corps had enough data that they could have acted sooner and more pro-actively given that they already had information and a proposal from the State through the water quality certification process to use Areas E and F first and Area B last. He suggested that the Corps might develop different contract scenarios, one for the predicted amount of material, one for cases where there was less material, and another for cases where there was more material. With different plans in place they could anticipate changes and act more immediately.

Response: Danil Hancock (OIO) responded that multiple scenarios might make the bidding process more difficult and that such a contract would be difficult to write because of the different requirements for large and small amounts.

Comment: Dave Fox (ODFW) stated that the Corps had made a good faith effort in responding to the requested changes. He added that it would also be good to plan the scenarios up-front, although not necessarily in a contract.

Follow-up: Kathi Larson (USFWS) agreed with Dave Fox that the Corps had made a good faith effort. She also asked whether the Corps would be tracking where the material was going beyond movement in the channel.

Comment: Rick Vining (WDOE) stated that the Corps had made a good faith effort after the matter was brought to its attention. The Corps may have already been talking about it internally, but they didn't know it at the time. He was happy with the result, but not that the Corps had to be reminded rather than acting when they had been given notice. He requested more timely communication. He suggested

- ✂ communication on week to week developments concerning disposal
- ✂ survey information updates
- ✂ information about the amount of materials taken to the sites
- ✂ information about the method of disposal, for example whether it was placed in cells

He suggested that information of this type be distributed once a month or an appropriate time period determined by the Corps.

Comment: Christine Valentine (DLCD) commented that the use of Area E was acceptable, its what they wanted. She added that updates would be helpful, but they would still like full year information. She was also interested in the same types of information as suggested by Rick Vining.

Comment: Ben Meyer (NMFS) commented that he was comfortable with the use of Area E. He indicated that he would be interested in transects on the other side of E, in addition to those set up in the channel, to get a quick and dirty idea of where the sand is going.

Comment: Christine Valentine (DLCD) agreed with Ben Meyer that the transport issue was of interest.

Follow-up: Edie Beasley (CRCFA) also wanted to know where the sand in Area E is going. She was concerned that if it is moving north it might pose a problem for boats going out. She reiterated that she was comfortable with the use of Area E as long as disposal does not create a hazard to navigation. She also reminded the group that Dale Beasley had a concern with filling Area E above 55 feet and that was regardless of navigation. She added

- ✂ if the Corps cannot maintain 55 feet, CRCFA would want the Corps to go to Area F.
- ✂ receipt of agency correspondence was absolutely necessary
- ✂ CRCFA would like to have survey data when completed

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✂ she agreed with Rick Vining and Christine Valentine regarding what information that would be useful

✂ CRCFA would like to know if site E disposal was in cells

Response: Stephan Chesser (Corps) responded that disposal at Area E was not in cells. The disposal would occur in new site E, approximately 1,000 x 4,000 (units?), at the deepest part. He stated that disposal was to be random within the area coordinates.

Response: Eric Braun (Corps) added that the material would be dispersed evenly.

Follow-up: Rick Vining (WDOE) asked about the Corps' future plans.

Response: Eric Braun (Corps) replied that the Corps would be completing a new survey in the next two days and would know how much material is left. If it the amount is as before, they would continue placing it at Area E. If the amount increased, they would split it equally between Areas E and F.

Follow-up: Rick Vining (WDOE) asked how much material was in Area E.

Response: Stephan Chesser (Corps) responded that by August 14th a total of 782,000 cu.yds (units?) had been dredged with half going to Area E and half to Area B. As of August 15th, the balance would be placed solely in new Area E.

Comment: Rick Vining (WDOE) indicated that he understood that there would be space available for up to 2 million cu.yds in Area E and that he preferred and expected the Corps to continue using Area E alone, unless using E created a mounding problem.

Comment: Eddie Beasley (CRCFA) stated that she appreciated the Corps' work and their making the change midstream. She noted, however, her concern that letters from the States were being issued but not followed. Again, she gave credit to the Corps, but wanted to see the Corps being more proactive.

Comment: Christine Valentine (DLCD) indicated a concern regarding coordination of information with the Oregon fishers.

Follow-up: Eddie Beasley (CRCFA) asked about notice to the mariners. She wanted to know if notices had gone out and if so, when they had gone out.

Response: Stephan Chesser (Corps) responded that he would follow up and find out about the notices.

Follow-up: Bob Burkle (WDFW) noted that weekly updates are prepared in Washington and asked if such updates were prepared by the Oregon Corps.

Response: Eric Braun (Corps) replied that they have a weekly status on vessels indicating where the dredges are located. They also receive a daily report by the contractor on the amount, the sites, and any encounters, such as rough seas. This information later goes into a long term report. They do not usually create any additional reports.

Comment: Eddie Beasley (CRCFA) suggested that the Corps might put such information on a web site. She suggested that the information need not be very complex but might simply include the cubic yards amounts, from where to where, and when.

Response: Eric Braun (Corps) responded that the quantity would be approximately 30-40 cu.yds per day, until all the material was disposed, and it would be going to the selected site.

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ADDITIONAL UPDATES FROM PARTICIPANTS WITH TASK ASSIGNMENTS

Dave Fox reporting on Recreational Fishery

Dave Fox (ODFW) reported on recreational fishery information collected for the overlays. He reported that

- ✂ recreational fishing was not as big a concern
- ✂ the main impact on the recreational fishery was more vague
- ✂ the information would come from charter boat operators

Comment: Bob Burkle (WDFW) noted that in Washington the State dictates where you can fish so that the legal description of such areas could be used for preparation of the overlay.

SCHEDULING AND IMPORTANT DATES

Due to conflicts in scheduling, it was agreed that Kim Larson would contact the participants to schedule an acceptable alternative date for the next meeting.

Comment: Kim Larson (Corps) reminded the participants that they had committed to getting the information for preparation of the overlay maps to the Corps by September 24th. He suggested that the participants submit their information in advance of the actual meeting day.

PRESENTATION ON BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE DATA AVAILABILITY

Danil Hancock (OIO) presented the group with an update on his research activities. He reported that in his review of published studies and sampling data he had carried out the following:

- ✂ looked for factors linking the data
- ✂ re-checked the plotted coordinates where concerns had been raised at the last meeting
- ✂ prepared a summary of all studies and all sample locations
- ✂ written summaries of each individual study, including the proposals, results, and conclusions of each
- ✂ summarized the overall picture of the area based on the studies
- ✂ discussed the strength of information

He reported that the benthic organisms data showed good coverage and the crab data somewhat less extensive. He concluded that

- ✂ attempting to correlate studies by cluster analysis would not provide useful information for the group.
- ✂ abundance information would be more useful for GIS density and patterns
- ✂ food habitat studies may provide helpful linkages

He informed the group that he had completed a draft.

Comments: Christine Valentine (DLCD) asked when the report would be final.

Response: Kim Larson (Corps) responded that the draft would be final by the end of the month, after comments and before the next meeting.

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LIST OF ATTENDEES

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