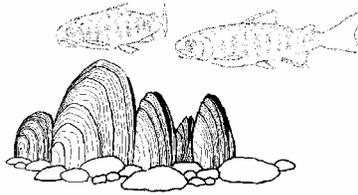


Pacific Northwest Native Freshwater Mussel Workgroup



May 24, 2006
Minutes

Attendees: Al Smith, Wendy Walsh, Kevin Aitkin, Kathy Thornburgh, Brent Vadopalas, Rob Plotnikoff, Michelle Steg, Molly Hallock

Conference phone: Nancy Duncan, John Fleckenstein, Jeff Adams

Guests: Deb Lester, Mary Maier, Dean Wilson (King County Metro); Jay Davis (USF&WS); Sarah McCarthy (NOAA)

Purpose: This was a regularly scheduled Workgroup meeting.

Overview of pre-spawn Coho mortality study Sarah McCarthy gave a thorough overview of the work the task force has done. Jay Davis contributed a lot to the presentation. The objective is to document the rates of pre-spawn mortality in representative Seattle urban streams and non-urban reference streams. Only females are being surveyed because males may spawn more than once. High mortality has been documented in urban streams. Symptoms observed include gaping, splayed fins, lack of coordination and spasms. Even fish fresh from the ocean die quickly. Conventional water quality parameters such as DO, temperature, etc. were tested and ruled out. Chemical contaminants were present but not high enough to cause acute mortality. No diseases were found that could account for the mortality.

Additional studies included: a Coho embryo study using raw and filtered stream water showed that the embryos on raw water experienced greater mortality, were smaller and had more defects; a population modeling study predicted that Coho would become extinct in 32 years at the present mortality rate; a GIS land use study showed a correlation with roads and Coho mortality and a climate study showed a correlation between first fall rains and mortality. The interpretation is that Coho are very sensitive to contaminants and that some toxic material(s) must have been missed.

Bear Creek mussel mortality The group discussed at length mussel mortality in Bear Creek and how the Coho study might tie into solving the mussel die-off. King County has surveyed mussels in three creeks. Bear Creek is suffering the most rapid die-off, change in sex ratios and poor overall mussel health. Mussels in upper Bear Creek appear to be healthier. There was discussion of forming a Bear Creek Task Force and having a Bear Creek Workshop. As usual, funding is a problem. The question came up

of which comes first, the workshop or the task force. Who should be invited to be on the task force? Without money, there may be difficulty finding players. Possibly Mary Maier can get this rolling.

Malacological Society Symposium Kevin reported on Terry's work on a NW mollusk session and logistics of the symposium. At present, Nancy is the only Workgroup member attending the symposium. She has agreed to be at the Workgroup table and set up our poster. Al will contact Christina for the poster abstract for Nancy to submit to the society for the poster session.

Workgroup affiliation with Xerces Society Al updated progress on an MOU between the Workgroup and Xerces Society. After discussion, it was decided that Al will send out the draft MOU to Workgroup members for review. He will include comments already submitted by Nancy and Kevin. He will then schedule a conference call for further discussion after the comments are in.

Miscellaneous topics Several workgroup members updated the Workgroup on specific topics. Molly discussed a study in Eastern Washington that will be done by the habitat division of WDF&W with the cooperation of gold dredgers. The purpose is to determine the impact of 4 inch gold dredging on mussels with real dredging and comparison with a control area.

Jeff relayed that progress on Streamnet is moving slowly but that work on the fields should begin in a couple of months. Jeff will send out software access to enter data into the system.

Nancy discussed long term monitoring. She said the feds want two processes: presence/absence and monitoring. Field testing will be done in July with the Cow Creek Tribe. Let Nancy know of groups that would be interested in participating in long-term monitoring. For mussels, an important question is how to locate plots.

Kevin reviewed the status of Conduit Dam removal that is scheduled to happen in 2008. The Workgroup discussed the feasibility of surveying and relocating mussels. Kevin will keep the Workgroup in the loop.

Al covered plans for Oregon Public Broadcasting's Oregon Field Guide crew to film mussels on Steamboat Creek in the Umpqua Basin and at the OSU Marine Science Center in June. Jason has done a lot of work setting this up and Al will contact OPB about adding a segment on Portland area mussels.

Wendy announced that Lee Hastie from Scotland will be in the Seattle area in August for two weeks and that she may have a reception for him and his family at her place. Al said that Cynthia Tait has taken a new job in Utah with the U.S. Forest Service as the regional non-game fish and invertebrate specialist. The next meeting will be September 13 in Vancouver.