Person Called- Alan Weaver

Affiliation- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Phone Number- (804) 367-6795

Call Originator- Luke Graham

Date- May 16, 2016

Summary of Discussion:

I contacted Alan Weaver of Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland fisheries to inquire about fish passage for Scott’s Mill Dam. I asked what requirements there would be (in regards to run numbers) to initiate a trap and transport program for American Shad on the James River (at Scott’s Mill Dam). Mr. Weaver stated that currently the Shad run on the James River (as well as the Susquehanna river) has been far below their targeted population levels with runs only reaching numbers from ~100- 1000 fish in recent years at Bosher’s Dam. He stated that this was far lower than the targeted goal of 1,000,000 fish for the entire James River. The capacity of the single vertical slot fishway at Boshers Dam is 500,000 Shad. Additionally, he noted that instead of having a targeted number of shad reaching Scott’s Mill Dam to initiate a trap and transport program, he would be more likely to recommend a daily trap and transport program during peak shad run dates.

 However, Mr. Weaver stressed during the conversation that he was more concerned in the present with the passage of American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) and Sea Lamprey (*Perimyzon marinus*)at Scott’s Mill Dam. As an example, Mr. Weaver stated that currently there is a trap and transport program for American Eel at the Roanoke Rapids Dam and a plan is being formulated to provide safe and effective downstream passage for when the adults mature and head back to the ocean. However, he recommended that instead of a trap and transport program, he would rather see Scott’s Mill Dam install a vertical slot fishway to allow passage of all fish species within the James River. This was due to the difficulty in having to create different capture/transport programs for all migratory fish species (i.e. American Shad, American Eel, Sea Lamprey etc.) He also noted the importance of resident species fish passage within the James as another reason for being in favor of a vertical slot fishway over other fish passage methods.

Mr. Weaver also stated that any trap and transport program for fish species would have to also include a safe and effective downstream fish passage plan for downmigrating anadromous adults (specifically American Shad that don’t die and move back down), downmigrating catadromous adults (specifically American Eel) and downmigrating juvenile anadromous fish (American Shad and Sea Lamprey). This would include determining where trapped and transported fish would be released. If released upstream of other dams/projects safe and effective downstream passage would have to be coordinated with those projects. It would not be ecologically valuable to transport fish to a reach of river where there is not a safe path downstream. He additionally stated that if the Scotts Mill project acts independently of the upstream projects, free swimming fish passage would be preferable over trap and transport programs. Also, if there is a coordinated effort among the several upstream projects the overall passage plan would need to be revisited. This is due to large numbers of adult Sea Lamprey passing through the vertical slot fishway at Boshers Dam (percentage of total population reaching Boshers is unknown) and juvenile American Eel which also pass through Boshers Dam vertical slot fishway but cannot be counted because they can move behind and below the counting backdrop through grating that has 1” by 4” open spacing. Finally, Mr. Weaver stated that it is possible that an additional Eelway may be needed at Scott’s Mill Dam if a vertical slot fishway is built and it does not pass sufficient numbers.

Prepared By:

Luke Graham