

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEETING NOTES
August 28, 2000
CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM
HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON**

TMT Internet Homepage: <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/index.html>

DRAFT

I. Greeting and Introductions

The August 28 Technical Management Team conference call, convened to discuss September operations at Dworshak, held at the Custom House in Portland, Oregon. The call was chaired by Cindy Henriksen of the Corps. The following is a distillation, not a verbatim transcript, of items discussed at the meeting and actions taken. Anyone with questions or comments about these minutes should call Henriksen at 503/808-3945.

Henriksen welcomed everyone to the meeting, then led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

I. SOR 2000-30 and Dworshak Fall Operations .

Henriksen noted that the purpose of this conference call is to allow for further discussion of SOR 2000-30, received just before last week's TMT meeting. As you'll recall, said Henriksen, SOR 2000-30 requests that Dworshak be drafted to elevation 1500 in September to evaluate the effects of this operation on water temperature and fish passage.

We were unable to reach consensus on this SOR at Thursday's meeting, said Henriksen; there were a number of outstanding questions. The information requested at the meeting has been distributed; you will note that the Corps and BPA studies are not apples and apples. The BPA studies were run using the 50-year record in continuous mode; the Corps study is in refill mode, which stopped and reinitialized each water year at elevation 1520, in Case 1, and elevation 1500 in Case 2. Henriksen explained some of the detailed technical differences between the Corps and BPA model runs, for example, that the Corps model used 1.5 Kcfs, rather than 1.3 Kcfs, as a minimum Dworshak outflow during the fall-early spring period. .

The group spent a few minutes debating the relative technical validity of Corps and BPA model outputs and assumptions. With respect to the study that is being proposed, are there any questions about the temperature of the Dworshak outflow?

Henriksen asked. Also, is there any input from IDFG or the Nez Perce Tribe about this SOR?

Henriksen added that Dworshak is quickly approaching elevation 1520; over the weekend, the Corps reduced outflow to 8.5 Kcfs, and will reduce it further, to 4.7 Kcfs later today. Again, said Henriksen, the current goal is to achieve elevation 1520 at Dworshak on August 31. So you've already started ramping down? Steve Pettit asked. Yes, Henriksen replied, as was described at last week's TMT meeting.

Pettit said IDFG discussed this issue at length on Friday afternoon; the upshot of that discussion was that, with the forecast continuing to look very dry, Idaho does not want to risk drawing Dworshak pool down another 20 feet at this time. That would be consistent with the Nez Perce position as well, said Dave Statler. Both Ed Bowles and I feel this research is warranted, said Pettit, but the risk in this particular water and weather year is too great. If we had a study plan in place early in the summer season, so that we could tag more fish, I think the study would be more relevant – perhaps we can agree on a study plan for next year, said Kyle Martin. Jim Athearn added that there aren't many fish in the Lower Granite pool available for tagging.

Chris Ross said he had spoken to Ted Bjornn earlier this morning; it is true there aren't many tagged fish in the Lower Snake at the moment, but Bjornn said he has enough tags at Bonneville to allow him to tag hatchery steelhead, release and track them. He wants to know whether or not to do that, whether or not we draft Dworshak this year, said Ross. We've already told him to do it either way, said Athearn – we need that baseline information. Ross added that Bjornn has said he thinks he can tag four fish per day during the coming weeks, using the depth-sensitive temperature tags. There was general agreement that, even if he can tag only two fish per day, that would be better than no information. In response to a question, Ross said the evaluation would likely run from September 1-17.

Statler observed that, eventually, there needs to be some pointed discussion of the study design – we need to talk about the study duration, number of fish tagged etc. needed to yield valid results, he said.

Has everyone agreed with the operation the Nez Perce and Idaho have endorsed – that is, don't draft Dworshak below elevation 1520 this year? Athearn asked. I understand their caution, said Paul Wagner, but looking at the model runs, according to the Bonneville data, the impact on spring flows is only 1 Kcfs during the spring period, and there is a 98% refill probability. I don't get the same numbers you do, said Athearn – I only see 11 refills over the 50-year water record, based on the Corps' model runs.

The discussion returned to the validity of the Corps model vs. the BPA model; Wagner argued that the difference to refill probability between the two Dworshak elevations is not that great. Martin said that, from his perspective as a hydrologist, 2000 just doesn't appear to be a good year in which to draft Dworshak to elevation 1500.

Isn't there also some construction work at the hatchery, and a very narrow construction window before the fall chinook arrive? Marv Yoshinaka asked. I don't know enough about the situation to say whether or not there would be an impact to construction activities, Statler replied.

Basically, at today's conference call, we were looking for support for SOR 2000-30 from Idaho and the Nez Perce, said Henriksen; that support does not appear to be forthcoming. We will be conducting the temperature study on adult fish this fall, collecting baseline information, she said; do Idaho or the Nez Perce have any input on the temperature of the Dworshak releases? Is it a fair assessment to say that you support drafting Dworshak to elevation 1520 this year, and also support conducting the adult study next year? she asked. That's correct, said Pettit, adding that IDFG strongly supports reserving a portion of the BiOp volume above elevation 1520 to conduct next year's test in September. CRITFC and the Nez Perce concurred; Chuck Tracy said Oregon does not. Based on the results from both the Corps and BPA model runs, he said, it would make more sense to draft to elevation 1500, if there is a better water year next year. Martin said the risk to cultural resources is too great if Dworshak was to be drafted to elevation 1500. That is certainly a significant issue, Tracy agreed; I was speaking only of the risk to refill and spring flows.

Statler said the decision to draft Dworshak to below elevation 1520 should not be made independent of cultural considerations; that call needs to be made in formal consultation between the federal operators and the Nez Perce Tribe.

Yoshinaka said the Fish and Wildlife Service agrees with Oregon and NMFS on this issue. He asked about the potential for an abrupt change in the temperature of the Dworshak release water, noting that USFWS would prefer to see release temperatures in the 50-52-degree range during the month of September. We will be moving all of the units to undershot mode in the next day or two, Henriksen replied; we expect, however, that we will be seeing release temperatures in the 50-degree-plus range starting September 1.

What is the Corps' interpretation of the model results, in terms of the risk of a deeper draft at Dworshak to spring flows and refill probability? Statler asked. Obviously, if you draft to 20 feet below the interim draft limit, your confidence of meeting the April 15 flood control elevation goes down, Henriksen replied. In a dry water year, you sag farther and farther away from that April 15 flood control point during the winter. In 1998, we were more than 20 feet below our April 15 flood control point, after drafting Dworshak to elevation 1500 the previous fall. That was an 86% water year, she added. We did exceed the spring flow objective in 1998, however, said Wagner. That was due to a gigantic rain event over Memorial Day weekend, Henriksen said – personally, I wouldn't bank on that happening again this year.

Statler reiterated that the Nez Perce Tribe concurs with Idaho's recommendation that the 1520-foot BiOp draft limit at Dworshak not be exceeded this year. In response to a question from Henriksen, Robyn MacKay said BPA does not have a position on this

SOR. So what I'm hearing is that the SOR is supported by Washington, Oregon, NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service, Henriksen said; Idaho, CRITFC and the Nez Perce Tribe do not support it. Again, the plan at this point is to reach elevation 1520 on August 31, and then go to minimum outflow, 1.4 Kcfs if possible, on September 1, Henriksen said.

Wagner commented that the 1995 Biological Opinion covered only the period through August 31; it is silent on operations after that date, as it is on a specific refill probability by April 15. I have outlined the Corps' expectations for operations later this week, said Henriksen. At TMT on Thursday, we discussed the possibility of an IT call tomorrow, she said – do you still feel that is necessary? Have you made a determination that this will in fact be the operation? Wagner asked. Yes, Athearn replied – that is our intended operation.

For next year, is there a potential for NMFS to provide some additional enforcement resources to help alleviate the tribe's cultural concerns? Tracy asked. That issue will be addressed through consultation, Wagner replied. John Lear noted that there have been ongoing studies and assessments of cultural site locations and contents over the past decade; there is now a pretty clear picture of the archaeological sites, he said. That's at least a good starting-point on one of the large cultural resources issues, he said; we should be able to respond to a drawdown situation in a proactive manner. Would the Corps be willing to fund enforcement officers across the reservoirs to keep the pot-hunters away? Martin asked. That's an option, Lear replied; I can't answer the funding question specifically, but there are some options we can take a look at, certainly.

Henriksen asked again whether NMFS feels an IT conference call on this issue is necessary. NMFS does not intend to elevate the Corps' decision, Wagner replied. And our decision is based on the fact that this operation is not called for in the current Biological Opinion, Henriksen said; as we said, the planned adult evaluation will go forward this fall. There are some questions from Idaho and the tribes that we would like to explore for future years of study, she added.

Any objection if we begin ramping down Dworshak flows this evening to 4.7 Kcfs? Henriksen asked. None being heard, Henriksen said the Corps will, again, ramp Dworshak outflow down further, to minimum outflow, on September 1. Henriksen observed that the notes from today's meeting will be available in the next day or two, adding that she will send a memo explaining today's decision to the TMT membership prior to the group's August 31 meeting.

With that, the conference call was adjourned. Notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

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