

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

MEETING NOTES

April 11, 2001

**CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON**

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

1. Greeting and Introductions

The April 4 Technical Management Team conference call, held at the Customs House in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Rudd Turner of the Corps and facilitated by Robin Harkless. 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 Turner at 503/808-3935.

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

2. Update on the Federal Agencies' 2001 FCRPS Operations Plan.

Cindy Henriksen reminded the group that the Federal Executives have designated a series of operating criteria and priorities for 2001; to flesh out these criteria and priorities, a federal agency team is developing a 2001 Federal Operations Plan, which will in turn form the basis of the TMT's 2001 Water Management Plan. The federal agency team started working in earnest last week, Henriksen said; the current plan is to post the draft 2001 Federal Operations Plan to the Federal Executive web site tomorrow, April 12. The Executives will then be discussing that draft operating plan at their meeting on Friday, said Henriksen; the meeting will be held beginning at 9 a.m. at the Sheraton Airport Hotel. In response to a request, Turner said it should be possible for him to post a copy of the draft Federal Operations Plan to the TMT homepage as well.

3. Lower Granite Spring Operational Proposal.

Turner said NMFS has updated its Lower Granite operational proposal; that update was emailed to the TMT membership earlier today. Turner noted that the April final water supply forecast has dropped for Dworshak and the Snake River; that updated forecast, as well as updated histograms and water supply curves, are available via the TMT homepage.

Chris Ross said that, according to the most recent Corps analysis, Dworshak now has a 69% probability of refilling to elevation 1580, and a 31% probability of filling to elevation 1590, by June 30. In other words, said Ross, the probability of Dworshak's reaching elevation 1580 has

gone down slightly from the March final forecast.

Ross went briefly through the current Lower Granite test design, noting that it involves a six-day sequence of two three-day blocks, followed by a non-test day. This is Scenario A, he said; as we discussed last week; it will require a volume of water if it is going to be coordinated with a spill operation this spring. The issue is, where is that spring water coming from? Discussions are ongoing with Idaho Power Company regarding potential flow augmentation from Brownlee, but at this point, there isn't much water going into Dworshak, said Ross. In other words, things are pretty problematic with respect to the availability of spring flow augmentation.

If no flow augmentation is available, Ross continued, we will need to look at Scenarios B and C, which involve surging from Lower Granite with no flow augmentation. Under Scenario B, there would be a Monday pulse day, followed by four days of slow refill, to avoid drastic reductions in flow while the pool is refilling. This would be a pretty protracted operation, however, he said, with only one pulse per week. Under Scenario C, we would shift some of the load following into the evening hours, Ross explained.

For now, it probably makes the most sense to look more closely at Scenarios B and C, given the likelihood that no spring flow augmentation will be available, said Ross. FPAC has raised a number of concerns about Scenario A; they are more partial to Scenario C, and perhaps the next step should be to attempt to better define Scenario C.

Have you talked to Idaho Power about refilling Brownlee in June? Cathy Hlebechuk asked. Yes, Ross replied. Our understanding is that, for navigation, Idaho Power must maintain 13 Kcfs at Lime Point, Hlebechuk said; in past years, IPC has requested a waiver, because jet boats don't typically need that much water. This year, said Hlebechuk, it is likely that FERC will require IPC to release the full 13 Kcfs, because of the number of jet boat accidents in that reach last year.

The current TMT-recommended operation goes through April 22; it contains no flow augmentation, Turner said. We will develop the next two-week operations block at the April 18 TMT meeting, he said; in other words, we probably don't need to make a final decision on this today, but we will need to make one at next week's TMT meeting.

Steve Pettit said the salmon managers will be providing NMFS with a final set of comments on the proposed Lower Granite "pulse" operation later today. Pettit added that FPAC will continue to discuss the Lower Granite operation at next Tuesday's conference call. Ross said he will email FPAC's final comments to Turner as soon as he receives them, for distribution to the other TMT members. If FPAC develops a specific flow proposal, said Turner, we might be able to run some analyses prior to next week's meeting, if the proposal is available in time. He added that, from the standpoint of Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act compliance, the Corps regards Dworshak refill as a very high priority.

4. Development of MOP Operation.

The only reservoir operation regulations we have out right now are the 1.5-foot operating range at Bonneville, as well as a minimum elevation of MOP+1 at Ice Harbor and Lower Granite reservoirs until further notice, Turner said. Does TMT see a need to initiate any additional MOP operations at this time? he asked.

Christine Mallette said potential MOP operations were discussed at yesterday's FPAC meeting; our understanding is that the Lower Snake pools are already at or near their MOP elevations, she said. Lower Granite was at MOP yesterday, Henriksen said. We're currently using the full range of the operating pools as needed, said Robyn MacKay, but given the load situation, it wouldn't surprise me if all of the Lower Snake pools were near MOP. Are the pools filling and then coming back down? Ross asked. I would have to look at the hourlies, MacKay replied; however, the pools are being operated to meet power demand, and given the cold temperatures and heavier-than-expected loads over the past few days, it wouldn't surprise me if the pools were near MOP. We have been releasing more water from Grand Coulee this week than we did last week, to meet increased power demand, she added.

If folks are comfortable with the current operation, we will continue it, said Turner. Mallette said FPAC is now requesting that the Snake River pools be maintained at MOP elevations, recognizing the navigation constraints for Lower Granite and Ice Harbor pools, which require MOP+1. What about John Day pool operations? Hlebechuk asked. We did not discuss John Day, Mallette replied. When would you like the Lower Snake MOP operation to begin? Turner asked. Immediately, Mallette replied. To be clear, there is no request for a specific pool operation at John Day at this time? Hlebechuk asked. Not at this time, Ross replied.

In response to a question from Turner, Wagner said yearling chinook and steelhead passage is on the rise at all of the Lower Snake projects, in excess of 1,000 chinook and steelhead per day at Lower Granite in the past few days and up to 8,000 combined at Lower Monumental.

What about the power system impacts of the MOP operation? Turner asked. I don't see that as being a problem at this time, said MacKay. Given that fact, said Turner, in the absence of any objections, the Corps will issue a regulation – MOP at Lower Monumental and Little Goose, and MOP +1 at Lower Granite and Ice Harbor Reservoirs. MacKay said BPA would like the MOP operation to begin tomorrow morning, due to some Grand Coulee-related issues. It was so agreed. The Corps and BPA will coordinate, and the teletype will go into effect tomorrow morning, said Turner. Later in the meeting the Corps and BPA stated they had coordinated a start time of 1000 hours; TMT members agreed that this would be acceptable.

5. Water Temperature Modeling.

The Corps received a report back from Battelle on the first two scenarios run through the MASS-1 model, said Turner; I emailed that report to TMT members yesterday. The group spent

a few minutes going through the Battelle report, offering a few comments and corrections to the data used to calibrate and drive the model. Turner noted that the Battelle report is available via the TMT homepage.

The purpose of this report is to give us an idea of how bad things could get this summer? Pettit asked. The model runs looks reasonably good until the end of the summer period, said Nancy Yun. Kyle Martin objected to the fact that data from only three meteorological stations – Wenatchee, Hanford and Portland Airport – was used in this modeling exercise; he noted that there is a great deal of additional meteorological data available for the Snake River Basin. In response to a request from Yun, Martin said he will work with the Corps to obtain additional meteorological data to inform the model. If we can get that within the next few days, we can re-run these scenarios, said Yun – I'm willing to work with you on that. Nielsen added that, particularly in a low-flow year, it would be very helpful to have model outputs for the first two weeks in September.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the scenarios modeled and the model output. In going through this, it looks to me as though there is a good simulation vs. actual fit at the Lower Columbia projects, Paul Wagner observed, but the fit isn't as good at the Lower Snake projects.

Yun explained that the purpose of this exercise is to establish a base case, then evaluate the water temperature differences we might expect to see under different operational scenarios and weather conditions. Dick Cassidy observed that 1977 was a relatively cool weather year; in looking at these model outputs, what I take away is the fact that, if we were to get both a 1977-type water year and warmer 1994-type weather conditions, peak water temperatures at the Lower Snake projects could be 2-3 degrees C higher than what we actually saw in 1977, he said.

What would TMT like to see at this point, in terms of additional model runs? Turner asked. What are your overall impressions of what you've seen so far? It looks as though the temperature trends you have in there are probably pretty accurate, Martin replied; in my opinion, the 1994 temperature pattern is probably a pretty good guess as to what we're likely to see this summer. The model outputs do seem to be in the right ballpark, Wagner said; it seems to me that this is an upgrade to COLTEMP. I agree, Turner said – both gas and temperature can be evaluated with this tool, and it is more of a systemwide model.

We'll talk about what additional scenarios we would like to see run, and try to keep the final number under 27, Wagner said. That would be appreciated, said Turner; the available funding for this exercise is somewhat limited, and under the current contract with Battelle, we can really only run three additional scenarios. Cassidy noted that the systemwide spill operation chosen will be a particularly important variable, from a modeling standpoint.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, it was agreed that the salmon managers will attempt to develop some additional scenarios for modeling; the TMT will then discuss these additional scenarios and attempt to winnow the list to three at the group's April 18 meeting. In the meantime, Yun said she is available to discuss the model and its outputs, and asked anyone

with questions to contact her directly at 503/808-3937.

6. Other.

A. Update on Tribal Fishery Problem. Martin reported that there is a problem with the tribal fishery; Bob Heinith was out on the river yesterday interviewing tribal fishers, who reported that zero fish are being caught from the platforms and very few are being caught overall. The reason is the lack of spill to attract fish to Bonneville dam, and a lack of adult fish passage, Martin said.

Consequently, he continued, CRITFC has just submitted SOR 2001 C-2; it requests the immediate implementation of 2000 BiOp spill levels at Bonneville. It also requests that all three pools in Zone 6 – Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day – be operated within one foot of full. Commercial fisheries are set to begin soon, he said; CRITFC will be submitting an additional SOR covering those periods.

Martin went through the justification for this SOR, the full text of which is available via the TMT homepage. If this SOR cannot be implemented, he said, we request that the action agencies contact Don Sampson directly, and provide a formal written explanation by this Friday, April 13.

We'll take a look at the SOR, consider it and provide you with a response, Turner said. This is news to us, he said; have the fish managers heard of any adult passage problems at Bonneville? I have not, Nielsen replied; the numbers in the daily counts are consistent with the higher predicted run size this year.

Is the problem occurring in both the net fishery and the platform fishery? Nielsen asked. It is hitting the platform fishers particularly hard, Martin replied; the net fishers are doing somewhat better, but not as well as you would expect, given the magnitude of the 2001 run. Essentially, the fish are concentrating in the middle of the pool, rather than near the shores; our thinking is that spill at Bonneville will change the distribution of those adults within the pool, Martin said.

I'm somewhat mystified about how spill at Bonneville would affect the distribution of fish upstream of that project, Turner said; again, however, we will take a look at the request and provide a response to the tribes.

In a related vein, Greg Haller reported that the Nez Perce Tribe may submit a request for flow augmentation in the Snake River prior to next week's TMT meeting.

B. Albeni Falls Operations. Hlebechuk said the Corps operated Albeni Falls in the 2053-2054-foot range this winter; at last week's meeting, the salmon managers asked that Albeni Falls refill be delayed until after the Vernita Bar operation is over. The Corps is now proposing that Albeni Falls refill begin on May 5, with the goal of refilling that project by June 30. No objections were raised to this proposed operation at today's meeting.

7. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, April 18, beginning at 9 a.m. It was agreed that this will be a face-to-face meeting. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor

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