

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING NOTES

May 23, 2001

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

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

FACILITATOR'S NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the “record” of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

Hanford Reach/Vernita Bar Update:

Joe Lukas reported on fish survey data. Also, he said flows were kept at 60 instead of increasing to 80. Low flows are expected over Memorial Day weekend because Grand Coulee will go down to 20 kcfs discharge to meet load; Priest Rapids has a minimum flow of 36 kcfs. Salmon managers expressed concerns that the minimum flows will disturb prime rearing habitat for migrating sub-yearling fall chinook. They encouraged BPA to keep flows higher than 36 over the weekend as a result of a dramatic drop in recovery rates. Oregon stated that biological risks are being taken with every decrease and we should be made conscious of those risks.

BPA said they are aware of the effects on fish and because they are in a power emergency, they will see where loads take flow levels. BOR suggested making efforts to smooth out the fluctuation of flows since there is less than a 50% chance of filling Grand Coulee to within 10 feet. BPA is still willing to move loads to different projects in the Snake River (operations outside of MOP). Montana agreed that the swap may be worth considering since Mid-Columbia stocks are fairing so poorly this year. The COE pointed out that the decisions already made had been coordinated throughout the region and this year is bad for all involved, not just fish. NMFS feels that no changes should occur because of the power emergency and decisions made a month ago. There was no agreement on this issue, nor an expressed desire to raise it to IT. USFWS said they will raise the issue at the federal executive level.

Emergency Barged Fish Release at Ice Harbor:

Rudd reported on problems that occurred on barges last weekend. Fish were released and supported with 40 kcfs spill at the dam because of a blockage on the barge. The cause is still unclear, although lamprey, a tribal resource, were involved.

ACTION: COE will give a follow-up report on the investigation and review standard operating procedures for screen maintenance on barges. CRITFC will report information on whether or not there is an increased number of lamprey this year and if so, what explains it.

Upper Snake Water Delivery:

Pat McGrane reported on discussions with Idaho Power regarding shaping Brownlee water. They tried to reach a “shaping agreement”, but it was not acceptable to all parties. BOR released 1500 cfs on 5/11 and held for 6 days, then began ramping down 100 cfs per day. They were able to add an additional 5000 acre feet and they plan to release water out of the Payette run until June 10. BOR has now received up to 90 kaf. They want to release water now instead of later for a number of reasons, including fish, recreation, sport and most importantly, the inability to shape Brownlee.

Spill for Fish Passage:

Spill began last Wednesday at the Dalles and Bonneville for 300 mw months. RCC has been tracking levels and it is believed the spill may occur for 19 days. General Strock told the COE that he would like to spill for spring fish what is reasonable given the power system. Also, there is currently a daily spill level test at the Dalles.

ACTION: TMT will look at the results of the spill test at the Dalles as soon as they come out.

Current System Conditions:

Current operations are meeting power requirements, with spill at Bonneville and the Dalles. Grand Coulee filled twelve feet in the last week. The May final forecast is 56.5. Harold, from the National River Forecast Center, provided an explanation of forecast methods (handouts were presented).

Fish Migration Status: Yearling steelhead and chinook numbers look grim at McNary and in the Mid-Columbia reaches. It is taking them twice as long as last year to move through the system. Other stocks are looking promising, especially those returning to spawn.

SOR 2001-4 Albeni Falls:

USFWS has reported that there will be passage problems for bull trout concerning the request, but they are still unsure at what point. No survey work has been done nor has there been success yet with bathymetric reviews. (There is concern with alluvial fans.) The COE noted that it is looking for substantial information from salmon managers in order to stray from current and planned operations. They will continue to fill through June unless such information is presented. Their concerns regarding this request are: water may not get beyond Grand Coulee anyway, the effects on bull trout, there is no mention in any BiOps. to draft Albeni Falls, prior commitments have been made to local residents, and there are other local concerns. The issue is whether the bull trout can safely pass sand and other structures if the lake isn't raised.

ACTION: COE will need solid information from NMFS and USFWS before they are willing to make changes to planned operations. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

SOR 2001 C-5:

CRITFC has requested a May 24-25 operation to hold Bonneville, the Dalles, and John Day within 1 foot for tribal fisheries. The COE requested clarification regarding the type of fishery before taking action. Kyle said this is primarily a commercial fishery request.

ACTION: Kyle will double check the type of fishery for which this action was requested.

Recommended Operations:

For two weeks, the recommendations are to: continue meeting power system needs; fill headwater projects, Grand Coulee, and Albeni Falls; release 30k from Payette; and continue spill at Bonneville and the Dalles for 300 m/w-months unless other agreements are made at the Regional/Federal Executives level.

June 6 Face to Face Meeting, 9-12:

Meeting items are:

- COE update on barge incident
- CRITFC sun spot presentation
- COE/EPA temperature modeling results
- TDG update
- Hanford update
- Process discussion
 - WMP
 - guidelines
 - feedback from facilitator survey evaluations

May 30 Conference Call:

- Albeni Falls update
- TDG update
- Spill update
- Hanford update

Meeting Minutes

1. Greeting and Introductions

The May 23 Technical Management Team conference call, held at the Customs House in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Rudd Turner 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 Turner at 503/808-3935.

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

2. Hanford Reach/Vernita Bar Update.

Joe Lukas reported that, for the week of May 14-20, the average flow at Priest Rapids Dam was 48 Kcfs, with Grand Coulee in refill mode. Average flow at Priest Rapids was 56 Kcfs the previous week, Lukas added. The 60 Kcfs fluctuation limitation was in effect last week, although the full fluctuation range was only used on Tuesday and Saturday. Field personnel sampled 50 random sites last week and found 19 fall chinook, down from 68 sites and 922 fish sampled the week before. Index monitoring sampled 3,500 fish, a sharp drop from the 7,000+ the previous week. Average size was up about one millimeter, to 45 mm, said Lukas.

There was a conference call on Monday to discuss some changes to the Hanford stranding protection program given, the higher level of biological impact we're seeing from fluctuations in flow this year, Lukas continued. At that call, we agreed to keep the flow fluctuation limitation at 60 Kcfs; we also discussed expected low flows over Memorial Day weekend. It now appears that the Grand Coulee releases will be higher than we thought they would be on Monday, Lukas said. Robyn MacKay said Grand Coulee will be operated to meet load over Memorial Day weekend; it has been going down into the 20s over the weekend, and I would expect to see that over Memorial Day as well, she said. The minimum flow at Priest Rapids is 36 Kcfs, so that will be maintained, she said. Howard Schaller observed that, at 36 Kcfs of flow at Priest Rapids, rearing habitat for juvenile fall chinook is all but eliminated.

Paul Wagner observed that two significant mortality events occurred on May 9 and 10. That seems to be something of an anomaly, said Lukas – there were no significant flow fluctuations on those dates – only about 10 Kcfs -- but that illustrates how sensitive the fish are to even minor fluctuations in flow when river flows are as low as they are this year.

The only other thing to report is that we're going to look at what flexibility we have to smooth out the sizable drop in flows over Memorial Day weekend, Lukas said. In general, said Jim Nielsen, I think it's fair to say that the low flows have contributed to higher stranding and mortality this year than we've seen at what might be called more normal flows. Schaller encouraged the action agencies to consider keeping flows as high as possible over Memorial Day weekend, because of the dire situation the Mid-Columbia migrants are currently facing. Rob Lothrop of CRITFC agreed with Schaller's suggestion, as did Nielsen. We have lost so many fall chinook already that we if there is anything we can do to reduce the peril these fish are facing, we should do it, said Schaller – the fall chinook are an extremely important stock to fisheries up and down the coast.

Given the water conditions this year, BPA isn't in a position to increase flows from Grand Coulee to the extent it puts us in a surplus power condition, MacKay said – we're just going to have to see where loads take us. I don't think it's reasonable to expect flows through the mid-Columbia to be as high as they were during the week, she said; we know the bottom is 36 Kcfs, and they could be higher. Any water we take out of Grand Coulee for spring migrants now won't be available for summer migrants later, MacKay said. We are talking about a summer

stock, said Schaller – it's just a question of whether you kill them now or later. It's a policy call, said MacKay – if folks want to raise this to IT, they can do so.

What would be the point? Nielsen asked – the reality is that we're in a power system emergency. Do the states and tribes feel the IT is an adequate venue to decide this issue? Silverberg asked. The state fishery agencies want the action agencies to be aware that reducing flows through the Mid-Columbia to this extent, at this time, carries a significant biological risk, said Christine Mallette. The other thing to add is that I don't think we anticipated that mortality would be a magnitude higher this year than what we've seen in the past, Schaller said – presumably the sampling areas are representative of the population as a whole. However, the fish have now emerged, and presumably are less-vulnerable than they were earlier in the season, Turner observed. However, when flows are this low, you eliminate the rearing habitat, and these fish are forced out into the mainstem, said Schaller. Turner noted that a number of actions, such as the delay of Albeni Falls refill, have been taken to maintain that rearing habitat as long as possible in this very difficult water year.

To me, it seems the biological reality of the 2001 flow situation is now at hand, and it's not a comfortable place to be, said Wagner. Is there something the TMT can do today that will have an effect on this situation? Silverberg asked. Given the water and power system emergency situations we find ourselves in, if we want to draft Grand Coulee over Memorial Day weekend, that is a policy call, said MacKay. If that is the TMT's recommendation, said Turner, we need to frame it for the IT or the Regional Executives.

Pat McGrane said the latest projections show less than a 50% chance that Grand Coulee will fill to within 10 feet of full by June 30. We've been at the 36 Kcfs Priest Rapids minimum for long periods since May 12, he said; if there is damage at that flow level, it's already been done. It seems to me that fluctuations are the real problem at this point; it may be a better operation to hold flows steady at 36 Kcfs rather than peaking up and down, he said.

Wagner observed that, in such a poor water year, this is just another thing the fish are going to have to live with. We're all part of this regional process, he said, and if others feel another operation is warranted, they need to elevate that issue. Mallette said the action agencies need to explore all possible alternatives that might keep flows at Priest Rapids above the minimum. Again, said MacKay, we will be following load over Memorial Day weekend; we understand how grim the situation is this year, but given the flows we have to work with, that's all we can do. There is one other possibility, she said – fill the Lower Snake projects outside of MOP and transfer generation to the Mid-Columbia projects. However, at least at this point, the states and tribes are not willing to consider that alternative, she said.

It is the job of the salmon managers to point out the biological consequences of the operating agencies' actions, said Nielsen. I think that's a mischaracterization, said Turner – we have developed operating guidelines and priorities, and while maintaining later flows for Hanford Reach juveniles isn't on that list, summer flows are. This is a bad situation for everyone, he said – BPA, the irrigators and others are all taking some major risks this year. It's not just the fish that are at risk, he said – it isn't accurate to say only that this situation is bad for fish.

Wagner added that the TMT made a conscious decision to maintain Priest Rapids flows at 65 Kcfs during the critical emergence period, in the knowledge that this could compromise flows later this spring and summer.

I'm not hearing anyone say they want to elevate this to IT, said Silverberg. Again, the question is, what would be the purpose? Nielsen said – the answer is a foregone conclusion. It would be appropriate to revisit the priority for the available water, said MacKay – if the TMT feels spring flow augmentation is more important than summer flow augmentation, then we can talk about that. The question is, are we talking about summer flow only for Snake River migrants, or for all summer migrants? Schaller said. All we're asking, given the fact that mortality is much higher than anyone anticipated, is whether there are any other operational alternatives we can explore to keep flows up through the Hanford Reach. Again, said MacKay, BPA will be meeting load over Memorial Day weekend, but we will not consciously put ourselves in a surplus power position. The fact is, if water leaves Grand Coulee now, it's gone. In response to a question from Nielsen, MacKay said any energy exchanges with California are returned within 7 days, so it's no net change to the system over seven days.

Are we ready to move on, or is more discussion needed? Silverberg said. Schaller said this topic will be on the agenda for Friday's Regional Executives conference call.

3. Emergency Barged Fish Release at Ice Harbor.

Turner reported an incident early Saturday where a barge transporting 359,000 juvenile fish, mostly steelhead, had to release its fish in the Ice Harbor forebay. The biologists on the barge, after coordination with others at the Corps, released the fish, after which we authorized six hours of 40 Kcfs spill at Ice Harbor that project to help the fish pass the project, he explained.

The cause of the incident was plugging of the outlet screens by juvenile lamprey mortalities in the barge, Turner said; the estimate of salmon mortality during the incident was 0.2%. There was a danger that the barge would overflow – they were losing hydraulic control of the barge, so the decision was made to release the fish, Turner explained.

They're not sure of the actual cause of the incident, Turner continued; there has been some speculation that the barge may have passed through a zone of contamination that affected lamprey, but not salmon. Is this something that is going to recur in the future? Litchfield asked. We don't know, Turner replied; all we can do now is keep cleaning the screens while the barges are moving fish. Kyle Martin observed that, while others in the region may not appreciate the lamprey, the tribes view them as an important fishery resource, so this situation is cause for concern. Mallette asked that the Corps provide a follow-up report once the cause of this incident is known, and also asked that the Corps review its SOPs covering such situations. It would also be helpful if we could get a sense of how many lamprey we're transporting, she said, and whether the lamprey that were loaded aboard this particular barge were typical in number. Martin said he will check with CRITFC biologists.

4. Upper Snake Water Delivery.

McGrane reminded the group that, at the last TMT meeting, he was asked to approach Idaho Power about shaping a 2-3 day pulse from Brownlee to help move fish past Lower Granite. IPC replied that they would not do so without a shaping agreement with BPA or Reclamation, said McGrane. BPA and Idaho Power pursued that agreement, but it never came together, he said.

Reclamation then started releasing 1.5 Kcfs at Milner on May 11, said McGrane; Milner flows were held at that level for six days before we began ramping down at a rate of 100 cfs per day. In the meantime, he said, we've found an additional 5 KAF of water, making the total Upper Snake release 43 KAF, so we've tacked that volume on to the Milner release; Milner is currently passing 800 cfs.

Absent any TMT objection, he said, we're planning to start releasing 900 cfs above irrigation demand out of the Payette system; that is water that would normally be used to keep flows up for bull trout below Deadwood Reservoir this winter. The total we have available is 30 KAF out of Cascade Reservoir, McGrane said; we will be releasing a total of 1.1 Kcfs from that project through June 10. McGrane added that Reclamation has reached an agreement with local irrigators to provide this water now, and still provide bull trout flows this winter.

Why release it now, rather than this summer? Nielsen asked. We're trying to put the water on the fish now, while temperatures out of Brownlee are still relatively cool, McGrane replied; there are also a number of other benefits to releasing that water now. The fact that we do not have a shaping agreement with Idaho Power, and Brownlee is full right now, so that water will be passed downstream, also played a role, he said. This is particularly true given the fact that IPC has said, in writing, that they are not only unwilling to shape water absent a shaping agreement this year, but are unwilling to pass water downstream when Brownlee is less than full unless they receive some sort of compensation. Reclamation's position is that intercepting flow augmentation is an illegal diversion, said McGrane; there are specific statutes in place to protect the water Reclamation releases for salmon flow augmentation.

What would be the consequence of delaying this release until July? Nielsen asked. Confrontation with Idaho Power, higher water temperatures and a detrimental impact on recreational flows in the Payette, McGrane replied. In response to a question, McGrane said flows at Milner will stay at 230 cfs at least through June 12; at that point, Idaho Power will have to go to the water bank to try to find some additional water to maintain those flows. If they are unable to find any water, and it is unlikely that they will, then the Snake will go dry at Milner, said McGrane.

5. Spill for Fish Passage and Studies.

Spill for fish passage started on May 16, last Wednesday, said Turner; the agreement is that spill will be provided up to 300 MW-months at The Dalles (30% of instantaneous flow) and Bonneville (50 Kcfs spill). Through midnight last night, said Turner, this operation is estimated to have used, in six days and six hours, 97.3 MW-months, almost a third of the total amount. The

Dalles has been spilling between 24 Kcfs and 66 Kcfs, he said. At this rate, although flows will vary considerably, it looks as though we will get about 19 days of spill with the 300 MW-months total allocation, Turner said.

I had heard that, absent an agreement with Grant County PUD, the spill program could end as soon as tomorrow, said Litchfield – what is the status of that agreement? My understanding is that BPA is working on that agreement, Turner replied. What we're talking about is a swap between BPA and Grant County PUD, which would require an application to FERC, MacKay said; the agreement would allow Grant PUD to exchange its summer spill with Bonneville for spring spill. There was a poll taken at Friday's Regional Executives conference call, Silverberg said; Oregon supported the swap; Montana did not support this agreement; Idaho and Washington did not participate in the poll, said Silverberg. I have subsequently read that both states do support the swap. The tribes that were present – Umatilla, Colville and Warm Springs – weren't sure what they were going to do, although the Colvilles said they did not support it but will not intervene at FERC, Silverberg explained.

The Executives said that, based on this input, they would not endorse the swap at this time, but would wait to see how the FERC process played out, said Silverberg; however, Steve Wright has made the decision to go ahead with the spill program anyway. That still doesn't answer my question, said Litchfield. We'll discuss the spill operation later in today's agenda, said Turner; at this point, the Corps is planning on 300 MW-months, because General Strock would like to see some fish spill this year. If BPA decides to curtail the spill program, we'll have to revisit this topic, said Turner.

The spillway survival test at The Dalles is underway, Turner continued, and will continue through Friday at a rate of 40% of total river flow from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. yesterday and today, and 30% of total river flow this Thursday and Friday, Turner said. We're holding daily conference calls to discuss the test operation, he added. Litchfield asked that the results of the spill survival test be provided to the TMT as soon as it becomes available.

6. Current System Conditions.

Turner said the system is operating to meet power system requirements, to maintain minimum flows at the Corps storage projects to fill reservoirs as high as possible by June 30, and to fill Grand Coulee as full as possible by June 30 consistent with meeting power system demand. We're also providing spill, as just described, at Bonneville and The Dalles. Day-average flows varied from 126 Kcfs to 180 Kcfs at Bonneville over the past week. At Lower Granite, day-average flows varied between 60 Kcfs and 91 Kcfs over the past week; they were 60 Kcfs yesterday, The River Forecast Center is forecasting another flow peak this weekend, said Turner, but 91 Kcfs may have been the peak Snake River flow this year. Current Dworshak elevation is 1563.5 feet, with inflows of 17 Kcfs; the project filled eight feet last week. Libby is now at elevation 2397.3 feet; inflows to the project are dropping, from 19 Kcfs last week to 9 Kcfs yesterday. The most recent SSARR run predicts that Libby will be at elevation 2433 by the end of June, Turner said. The SSARR does show Dworshak filling to elevation 1580 by June 30, however, he added.

At Albeni Falls, current project elevation is 2057.6 feet, Turner said; inflows varied between 28 Kcfs and 42 Kcfs over the past week, with outflows of 27 Kcfs. The project filled about a foot last week, which is about what we need to fill the project by June 30, Turner said.

McGrane said current Grand Coulee elevation is 1257 feet, 33 feet from full. The project filled 12 feet over the past week, and is now filling about a foot per day, due primarily to the fact the WNP-2 is down for maintenance for the next month. Hungry Horse elevation is currently 3513, 47 feet from full; the project filled six feet last week. Banks Lake is within the top foot of its operating range; the pump generators are back in operation, so everything is fine there. Reclamation still feels there is a 50-50 chance of filling Hungry Horse to within 20 feet from full, he said; the current SSARR run shows Hungry Horse filling to elevation 3543 by June 30. At Grand Coulee, it's harder to forecast, but we still feel there is nearly a 50-50 chance we'll fill to within 10 feet from full on June 30, McGrane said.

The May mid-month forecast is now available, said Turner; there is very little change from the May final forecast. Hungry Horse and Grand Coulee are looking a little better, both 60% of normal, he said.

Moving on to water quality, Ruth Abney went briefly through TDG information below The Dalles and Bonneville; both projects are within the gas cap, although with three days of lower river flow at Bonneville coming up this weekend, the Corps will be watching TDG levels there closely, given the fact that we're spilling 50 Kcfs around the clock. Chris Ross noted that he has seen diel temperature changes of 3-4 degrees C at that project, which seems somewhat excessive to him. Abney replied that a 3-4 degree change is not inconsistent with what has been seen in the past at that gauge.

Martin said he had sent an email to the RFC relaying some of the questions raised at the last TMT meeting. An RFC representative spent a few minutes explaining how the RFC's May final water supply forecast was developed. The TMT offered a variety of clarifying questions and comments. Ultimately, the RFC representative said that, statistically, the chances are low that the region will see two consecutive drought years. He added that, in the future, the RFC is considering providing a narrative explanation of how its water supply estimates are generated. In general, he said, it is important to state that the RFC takes a rigorously unbiased approach to the development of these forecasts, uninfluenced by any outside pressures or input.

Turner clarified that the questions for the RFC were raised and crafted by CRITFC, not by the TMT as a group. Thank you for following up on this, said Silverberg.

Moving on to fish movement, Wagner reported that combined yearling chinook indices at Lower Granite peaked on May 15 at 141,000 fish, down to about 70,000 today. At McNary, things are picking up somewhat, in terms of yearling chinook numbers; at John Day, the numbers have been pretty consistent recently. The steelhead run continues strongly at Lower Granite, and also peaked at about 250,000 fish on May 15. The count yesterday was 88,000. At McNary, steelhead have been slow to arrive, although the Ice Harbor barge release did provide a brief

bump in numbers. Looking at cumulative passage, for yearling chinook at Lower Granite, the numbers are surprisingly high – we’re right there within the realm of expectations, which is pretty good for this flow year. The May rain events were very helpful, he said; normally, it doesn’t rain much in Idaho in May. Steelhead show a similar trend, said Wagner; at Lower Granite, cumulative passage has now crept within the 95% confidence interval.

The picture is less rosy at McNary, he said; there have been no Mid-Columbia rain events, and things look dire. Time is running out for these fish, he said, and we don’t have much time to turn things around. The data shows that the steelhead that don’t make it out by about June 10 don’t make it out at all, he said – they have a window of opportunity, and if they miss that window, they die or, in some cases, residualize. Data from previous drought years suggests that the majority of the juveniles leave early, he said, so from that perspective as well, this year’s numbers don’t look very encouraging.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to what the cumulative passage numbers mean; in particular, the fact that cumulative passage at Bonneville looks relatively good this year despite the fact that McNary passage is very poor. Margaret Filardo observed that this is not an error; the indication is that juvenile passage from the Mid- and Upper Columbia is very poor this year. Ross noted that passage time to McNary for chinook and steelhead marked at Rock Island is almost twice as long this year as last year. Given that fact, and the numbers we’ve seen for passage through the Snake River so far this spring, said MacKay, I don’t understand why the salmon managers would be opposed to the idea of exceeding MOP at the Lower Snake projects and transferring generation at the Mid-Columbia projects.

How much increase in Mid-Columbia flow would you expect such an operation to yield? Wagner asked. About 10 Kcfs over the three-day weekend, MacKay replied. In response to another question, Cindy Henriksen said it is still possible that, even with the swap, Priest Rapids flows could still be near the 36 Kcfs minimum, depending on how Grant County PUD operates its projects.

Ultimately, Nielsen said the salmon managers have discussed this proposal in detail, and do not support shifting generation to the Mid-Columbia projects if it means going outside of MOP at the Lower Snake projects.

7. New System Operational Requests.

Prior to today’s meeting, the Corps received SOR 2001 C-5, covering reservoir elevations during the upcoming spring chinook commercial harvest. This SOR, submitted by CRITFC, requests the following specific operations:

- Bonneville Pool: operate the pool within 1.0 foot from full pool (msl elevation 77-76)
- The Dalles Pool: operate the pool within 1.0 foot (from msl elevation 159.5-158.5)
- John Day Reservoir: operate the pool within 1.0 foot (from msl elevation 264.5-263.5)

Martin spent a few minutes going through the specifics contained in this SOR, the full text of which is available via the TMT website.

We're confused about the nature of the fishery, said Turner – is this a ceremonial and subsistence fishery, or a commercial fishery? It's primarily a commercial fishery, but there is a ceremonial and subsistence component as well, Martin replied. Which is it? Turner asked – we don't typically hold the pools at a given elevation for subsistence fisheries. Again, it's both a gillnet and a platform fishery, Martin replied. Can you clarify that for us and send over a compact notice? Turner asked. I'll do that this afternoon, Martin replied.

8. Recommended Operations.

We would like to develop a two-week operation, said Turner, covering the period May 29-June 10. We will continue to operate the system to meet power system needs, and to fill the headwater storage projects, including Albeni Falls, to the extent feasible. We are still receiving the Upper Snake water, and will be receiving the Payette water as well, he said; we are also providing spill at The Dalles and Bonneville up to the equivalent of 300 MW-months.

9. Other.

A. Albeni Falls Operations. At the May 9 meeting, the TMT discussed an SOR regarding Albeni Falls operations, said Silverberg; the salmon managers were going to develop some additional resident fish information before a decision can be made on that SOR. My understanding of the question was what elevation at Albeni Falls provides reasonable tributary passage for bull trout, Schaller said; the answer is, we're not sure at what elevation passage problems occur. They're working on that question, but at this point, there isn't a lot of data. We're trying to find out whether there may be some bathymetry work out there, done for navigation or some other purpose; there is some concern, on the part of IDFG biologists, that the alluvial fans at the mouth of each tributary may interfere with bull trout passage if Lake Pend Oreille elevations are too low. However, at this point, we can't specify an elevation at which passage problems occur, Schaller said.

Where does this leave us with SOR 2001-4? Silverberg asked. From the Corps' standpoint, given that filling Albeni Falls by the end of June is the planned operation, that this is such a tight water year and Albeni Falls will be needed to help keep Columbia flows up this fall, the Corps was looking for a compelling justification to change that operation, Turner said; at this point, we don't see that compelling justification, so the plan continues to be to fill Albeni Falls by the end of June and keep it full through August 31. Even if water is released from Albeni Falls, he said, given the current water supply situation, there is a good chance it will be held up in Grand Coulee, and will not benefit listed species downstream. In addition, he said, we have concerns about the impacts of holding Albeni Falls at a lower elevation on listed bull trout in that

reservoir. Further, drafting Albeni Falls in the fall is intended, in the BiOp, to help keep lower river flows up while other storage projects are refilling after August 31.

In my view, we haven't looked at all of the information, said Nielsen – it probably makes sense to discuss fish status and the Mid-Columbia situation before we draw that conclusion. Doug Marx added that his understanding is that IDFG's position is that bull trout will be significantly impacted if the lake level isn't raised – there may be no spawning passage at all.

Again, said Cindy Henriksen, the Corps is waiting for compelling information that would encourage us to change this operation; the Fish and Wildlife Service doesn't have that compelling information at this point. Schaller said the Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to investigate the minimum lake level that will allow good bull trout passage into tributary spawning habitat. Marx observed that the entire economy of the area is dependent on the lake; local residents are engaged in litigation with the Corps and argue that they have a water right to elevation 2062.5 feet. If the Corps is going to change its normal summer operation at that system, he said, we need to know as early in the process as possible.

So we will hear back from the Fish and Wildlife Service next week, and if they are able to develop that compelling information, they will present it at that time? Marx asked. Correct, Schaller replied. In response to another question, Turner said the Corps has the authority to operate Albeni Falls, and will make the ultimate decision. We will need to have both NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service solidly in support of any proposed change to the operation before the Corps makes such a change, added a Corps legal representative. The Corps will coordinate with the other salmon managers before any decision is made, she added.

10. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next face-to-face meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, June 6, from 9 a.m. to noon. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

TMT Participant List

May 23, 2001

Name	Affiliation
Ruth Abney	COE
Scott Boyd	COE
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Cindy Henriksen	COE
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE

Jim Litchfield	Montana Consultant
Rob Lothrop	CRITFC
Robyn MacKay	BPA
Christine Mallette	ODFW
Kyle Martin	CRITFC
Pat McGrane	Reclamation
Jim Nielsen	WDFW
Kevin Nordt	PGE
Mike O'Bryant	Columbia Basin Bulletin
Chris Ross	NMFS
Howard Schaller	USFWS
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Rudd Turner	COE
Paul Wagner	NMFS

Phone

Name	Affiliation
Margaret Filardo	FPC
Jim Gaspard	B.C. Hydro
Russ George	Water Management Consultants Inc.
Bart Jones	
Joe Lukas	Grant PUD
Doug Marx	Attorney, Lake Pend Oreille Idaho Club
Ralph Slediger	Waterfront Property Management
Glen Traeger	AVISTA Energy
Marian Valentine	COE
Steve Wallace	PacifiCorp
Victoria Watkins	PYRA Energy Group

