

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEETING NOTES
December 19, 2001
CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON**

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

Weather Service/ NRCS:

Steve Todd and Harold Opitz of the NWRFC, and Phil Pastens from the NW Water Supply Forecast Center presented information to TMT about weather patterns and precipitation forecasts. They expressed uncertainty from the models, which show that temperatures and precipitation could be above or below normal in the coming months. Currently, precipitation is at normal levels, although supplies are still recharging from the drought. Additional information can be found at: www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/forecast/qpf.htm or www.wcc.nrcs.asda.gov. It was emphasized that there is a need for the group to continually track the water and snow supply to assist with in-river management.

Action: The COE, NRCS and NWRFC will put together a list of websites that track weather and snow information for use by TMT members. The COE will also give a briefing on the model they used that overlaps projects onto other data.

Question to TMT: Is there any weather or forecast information TMT is missing or needs that will help them do the job better? TMT expressed that if any variances are anticipated, a presentation should be added to the next agenda. Otherwise, the group will be presented with information once a month.

Project/Fish Updates:

BPA had to release water at Bonneville because the lower Columbia River was full. Discharge and tailwater elevations at Bonneville Dam were increased to 18' over a brief period of time. The question was raised whether to keep levels at 14 – 15' as an “exclusionary strategy” in order to keep the spawning areas lower.

WDFW reported that chum are finding new sites for spawning this year that haven't been seen in past years, although this could be due to better visibility this year. Spawning is expected to continue for the next two weeks. By raising the tailwater elevations, it is anticipated that the fish will be unable to spawn in areas that would raise the risk of being dewatered when the water levels lower. Given this information, a suggestion was made to go above 13' below Bonneville as a potential exclusionary strategy for spawning.

Action: NMFS didn't oppose the suggestion, as the Biological Opinion allows for such an action. Washington and Oregon will ask field staff to monitor this and notify them of any concerns with the operation. If so, an emergency call will be held Friday 12/21 at 3 p.m. Ron Boyce or Shane Scott will contact Cindy Henriksen about the need for a call, and she will inform the rest of TMT. The operation will drop back to 11.5' as soon as it can be maintained.

Project Updates:

Cindy Henriksen and Tony Norris gave updates on projects. During the discussion, the COE was asked to describe the criteria for flood control operations. This issue will be added to a future agenda. (January 9, 2002)

2002 Water Management Plan:

The new WMP is no longer a "TMT" plan, but an Action Agency plan that corresponds with the Biological Opinion and is part of the Implementation Plan. Scott Boyd, Suzanne Cooper, and Tony Norris presented the group with an overview of the plan. They hope to have a more detailed discussion at the next TMT meeting, at which members will have reviewed the plan and can ask clarifying questions. Following the next meeting, members are asked to provide written comments that the Action Agencies will respond to. Comments will be published either individually or as a summation. Comments can be emailed to Scott Boyd at scott.w.boyd@usace.army.mil

Action: TMT members will review the plan and bring questions or suggestions for discussion at the 1/9 TMT meeting.

Chum Dewatering Criteria Issue:

Paul Wagner drafted a memo that states NMFS' thinking in terms of dewatering criteria.

Action: TMT members will review the memo and add any factors that they see missing. NMFS will take a further step at laying out criteria, which Paul will email or fax to members.

Notification of Emergency Meetings:

Some non-TMT members (e.g. tribes and Mid-Columbia PUD's) expressed that they would like to be notified of emergency meetings.

The group agreed to add those who wish to be included on the calls to the email list. The COE will continue to phone and email TMT members with notification of an emergency call.

Next Face-to-Face Meeting, January 9th, 9 am:

Agenda:

- Weather and Project Updates
- Chum Status
- Water Management Plan
- Emergency Protocols
- Dewatering Criteria
- Other

1. Greeting and Introductions

The December 19 Technical Management Team meeting, held at the Customs House in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Cindy Henriksen of the Corps and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. 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.

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

2. Weather.

Steve Todd of the River Forecast Center briefed the TMT on the short- and long-term weather outlook in the Northwest. He noted that short-term, it is going to continue to rain; longer-term, there is some indication that things may begin to dry out. Todd said the equatorial Pacific sea-surface temperature (Southern Oscillation) index is currently at near-normal levels, although the indications are that water temperatures will begin to warm over the next several months, which may result in warmer-than-average weather in the Northwest in January, February and March.

Todd added, however, that there are no strong indicators that precipitation will be either heavier or lighter than normal in January, February or March, although the indications are that it is more likely to be wetter than normal than dryer than normal. He spent a few minutes describing how the NWS makes its long-term forecasts (which are generally couched in percentage chance of wet, normal or dry weather), then noted that last year, the NWS forecast a 43% chance of a wetter-than-normal year and only 23% chance of a dryer-than-normal year. This year, again, we don't have a strong indicator that it will be a wetter-than-normal or a dryer-than-normal year, or a warmer-than-normal or a cooler-than-normal year, Todd said, although my feeling is that we're starting to hedge toward a slightly warmer- and wetter-than-normal year.

Todd spent a few minutes describing the existing Pacific monitoring network, as well as how the Service's long-term forecasts are generated. He then yielded the floor to Harold Opitz, who went through current snow pack levels in the Northwest. In general, Opitz said snow packs are higher than average in most basins, up to 215% of normal in northeastern Washington. Don't interpret that to mean that normal precipitation is going to equate to normal runoff in 2002, Opitz cautioned – after the dry period we've just been through, we're going to go through some pretty heavy aquifer recharge before runoff normalizes. Overall, if I had to guess, we're looking at a near-normal to slightly below-normal runoff year, Opitz said.

He spent a few minutes taking the TMT through the River Forecast Center's various Internet resources, noting that his office has put together a 10-day temperature and precipitation page on its website, summarizing the best available information on current and short-term weather conditions; the email address is www.nwrfc.noaa.gov.

Phil Pasteris of NRCS National Water and Climate Center, which does water supply forecasting for the entire West Coast, jointly with NWS, then briefed the group on current snow survey and Sno-Tel information. He noted that all of this data is available via the www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov homepage.

Every month during the water supply season, Pasteris said, I create a written document and post it on the homepage, summarizing all of the relevant snow pack information in easily downloadable, grab-and-go form. I encourage you all to browse through our site and, if you have any questions, to contact me directly, he said.

So where are we? said Pasteris. According to the Sno-Tel network of 760 sites throughout the Northwest, we're doing pretty well, currently. One thing I've noticed is that, up to Thanksgiving, due to warm weather, we had virtually no snow pack, said Pasteris. That wasn't all bad, though, he said – what it did was recharge the groundwater before the snow arrived to seal in what would have been considerable dryness. In other words, he said, once the snow begins to melt, more of it will run off, rather than sink into the ground. Snowpacks are generally well above normal for this time of year, especially in the Cascades, central and northern Idaho and eastern Washington. The Klamath Basin is also looking very good, he said. The only area that is significantly below normal is western Montana/Hungry Horse. Snow-water equivalents also generally look good.

However, said Pasteris, it ain't over until it's over – last year, we had what we called the “Freddy Kruger Ridge” – you couldn't kill it, and it just hung in there diverting storms to the north and to the south of the Northwest. It could still materialize this year; things can turn on a dime in the climate business. However, according to the “drought meter” my office uses, we're slowly emerging from the drought conditions that have prevailed over the last two years, Pasteris said.

After a brief discussion, it was agreed to schedule a TMT field trip to the River Forecast Center to see how the forecasts are developed. In terms of our future interactions, said Henriksen, what are the TMT's expectations of the RFC and NRCS, both in terms of briefings and website content? Warning of any significant changes in the weather pattern would be crucially important to this group, said Jim Litchfield. It was agreed that an RFC representative will also provide a monthly briefing at upcoming TMT meetings. I think the take-home message today is that we're not out of the drought yet, Bettin said.

3. Project, Fish Updates.

Bettin said that, as we've just heard, we're not out of the drought yet; however, because of the heavy precipitation we've been experiencing, particularly on the west side of the Cascades, Bonneville discharge is on the rise – it averaged 153 Kcfs yesterday, but exceeded 200 Kcfs at night. The question is, do we want to try to continue to try to stick as closely as possible to the 11.5-foot Bonneville tailwater elevation target the day (when most spawning occurs), and purging the excess water at night, or do we want to shoot for a much higher tailwater elevation, even during daylight hours, and trust the streamside foliage band to discourage spawning above a certain elevation? Bettin asked. One complicating factor is the fact that flip-lip construction will

continue at Bonneville until February 28, which means no spill can occur at that project until then.

The group discussed potential strategies to deal with the increasing water volume at Bonneville. Ron Boyce said he will need to talk to others at ODFW before he can endorse any potential spawning exclusion strategy. Paul Wagner said the 2000 BiOp would not preclude the strategy suggested by BPA.

After a few minutes of discussion, it was agreed to pick up the daily discharge to achieve a higher Bonneville tailwater elevation during the day – 14.5 to 15 feet -- in order to discourage spawning at the 13- to-14-foot level (because of intervening bushes), and to drop the Bonneville tailwater elevation back to 11.5 feet as soon as weather, tidal and tributary conditions allow. Field crews will monitor the situation closely; if they see any major red flags, in terms of significant spawning at higher elevations, it was agreed that the TMT will reconvene on Thursday at 3 p.m. via conference call to discuss them.

Moving on to project information, Henriksen said Dworshak is filling slowly; it was at elevation 1523.4 feet as of midnight last night. The December 31 flood control elevation at that project is 1558 feet; I wouldn't expect that it will be achieved, Henriksen said. In response to a question from Steve Pettit, Henriksen said Brownlee is near full and will probably continue to be near full until December 31, after which it will be drafted as needed for power. She added that day-average flow at Lower Granite increased to 28 Kcfs yesterday. In response to another question, Henriksen said the current Libby elevation is 2415 feet; the project is releasing 9.6 Kcfs, and the December 31 flood control elevation at that project is 2411 feet. Tony Norris added that Grand Coulee is currently at elevation 1287.3 feet and passing inflow; Hungry Horse continues to draft to meet the Columbia Falls minimum.

4. TMT Water Management Plan.

Scott Boyd noted that, for the first time this year, this is the action agency's Water Management Plan, rather than the TMT's Water Management Plan, because the action agencies are responsible, under the 2000 BiOp, for its production. We are also responsible for taking into account any comments on the plan, he said. We are unfortunately behind schedule; the draft plan is now available on the Corps website, and I will be available to answer any questions on the draft Water Management Plan at the TMT's January 9 meeting. We would like to receive any written comments on the plan by the meeting after that, some time in late January, said Boyd.

Boyce commented that, given the lateness of the draft WMP's delivery (according to the BiOp, it was to be made available to the region by September, but was delayed due to the delay in the completion of the one- and five-year implementation plans also called for in the BiOp), early February may be an ambitious schedule for the submission of comments.

Boyd observed that, given the fact that little can be known for sure about the water supply for the upcoming year in September, the action agencies are proposing to update the annual Water Management Plan in late winter and early summer. In other words, he said, we're not throwing out the concept of adaptive management, but this is the timing imposed on us by

the BiOp.

After a few minutes of discussion, the action agencies agreed to include an appendix to the Water Management Plan listing all of the comments received, and their response to those comments.

Boyd then spent a few minutes going through the highlights of and changes to the draft 2002 Water Management Plan. He asked that any comments on the plan be submitted directly to him; his email address is scott.w.boyd@usace.army.mil. Henriksen reiterated that there will be further opportunity for comment during the development of the winter/spring WMP update in February.

5. Other.

A. Finalize Emergency Protocols. There is one more meeting that needs to happen here, but we're very close; we'll finalize at the January meeting, said Silverberg.

B. Chum Dewatering Criteria. Paul Wagner summarized the outcome of this agenda item at the December IT meeting; there was a lengthy discussion at that meeting, he said, and essentially, the IT's feeling was that this is an executive-level decision. The task that came out of this was for NMFS to develop a list of the factors they considered in developing this year's chum decision/operation, Wagner said.

Actually, my expectation from the same meeting was that the TMT should start considering chum dewatering criteria, but that NMFS would bring the first draft, said Henriksen.

Obviously, there is some confusion here, said Silverberg. After a few minutes of additional discussion, Henriksen reiterated her suggestion that, while dewatering chum redds will ultimately be an executive-level decision, some guidance from the TMT would be helpful. Ultimately, given the lateness of the hour, it was agreed that this topic should be placed on the agenda for the next TMT meeting. Wagner agreed to update and reformat a memo laying out the criteria NMFS has used in making its chum operational decisions and email it to the TMT membership prior to the next meeting of the group.

C. TMT Emergency Meeting Participation. There has been some concern expressed about the fact that various people who wanted to participate in the TMT process, particularly during our round of emergency calls (the tribes) are not receiving adequate notice of those meetings, Silverberg said. Basically, we need to find a better way to notify entities which may or may not be actual TMT members of our meetings, she said. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to place this item, too, on the agenda for next meeting.

D. TMT Web Page. Henriksen asked that any comments on the TMT homepage be submitted to her or to COE webmaster Mike Stanfill (email: michael.d.stanfill@usace.army.mil). We're getting ready for the 2002 in-season management period, she said, and it would be helpful to get any changes or additional links that people need as soon as possible.

6. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, January 9. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA writer-editor pool.

TMT ATTENDANCE LIST

DECEMBER 19, 2001

Name	Affiliation
Larry Beck	COE
Scott Bettin	BPA
Ron Boyce	ODFW
Scott Boyd	COE
Ruth Burris	COE
Dick Cassidy	COE
Russ George	Water Management Consultants Inc.
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Tim Heizenrater	Enron
Cindy Henriksen	COE
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Tony Norris	Reclamation
Harold Opitz	RFC
Steve Pettit	IDFG
Chris Ross	NMFS
Shane Scott	WDFW
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Steve Todd	NWS
Glen Traeger	Avista Energy
Maria Van Houten	Enron
Paul Wagner	NMFS
David Wills	USFWS