

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM  
MEETING NOTES  
September 11, 2002  
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 September 11 Technical Management Team meeting was chaired by Cathy Hlebechuk 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 Hlebechuk at 503/808-3942.

***2. 9/11 Remembrance.***

The meeting participants observed the one-year anniversary of the September 11 Attacks on America, viewing a brief slide presentation.

***3. Dworshak Update.***

Hlebechuk said Dworshak reached elevation 1520.2 at midnight last night. We started ramping outflow down last night, she said, and the project will reach minimum outflow by 1 a.m. Thursday morning. The current Dworshak outflow is 6.6 Kcfs, and will be down to 5 Kcfs later today, Hlebechuk said. She noted that approximately 185 kaf of Dworshak storage has been delivered during the month of September. The project will continue to draft slightly through the month of September, as inflows are expected to be slightly less than minimum outflow from Dworshak.

***4. New River Forecast Center Products.***

Harold Opitz of the RFC began by saying the RFC is in the process of developing a new web page. I've been keeping track of some of the questions the TMT has been asking, he said, and have revamped many of our work products to answer those questions. One thing that will be released some time in October is a sub-page that shows the products that will be available in the future, Opitz said; what we've added is a new means of getting to the information by clicking on a map showing various sites across the basin – Dworshak, Grand Coulee, Libby etc.

Opitz went through some of the other new features on the RFC webpage:

- historical forecast and actual runoff information
- a new product that tracks both forecast and observed runoff volumes, by project, over an entire water year.
- The mid-month and early-bird forecasts will now include the entire gamut of information included in the monthly final forecasts
- Expanded verification information (forecast vs. 30-year average and observed runoff, by month)

Again, many of these changes were based on the TMT's input, Opitz said. In response to a question, Opitz said the RFC is also working on standard deviation and error calculations; in general, he said, if we're within 5%-8%, we're doing pretty well. Opitz added that the new RFC web page will debut in October. The group complimented Opitz on the changes, saying that they appear to be extremely useful.

The discussion then turned to the end of SSARR as the Corps' and RFC's forecasting tool of choice. Opitz said he had taken the observed runoff for this season, plotted it up, then plotted all of the SSARR forecasts over the season. If you look at that, he said, it appears to be an ensemble trace. We know there is a lot of uncertainty in the SSARR runs, Opitz said; the bottom line is that, if you thought you were getting useful information out of the SSARR in years past, you might be surprised if you look at our plot of this year's information.

In addition, he said, SSARR is old calculations on old HP machines that can no longer be supported, technically, if anything goes down. For that and other reasons, said Opitz, we will be transitioning to the ESP method this fall. ESP will also allow us to run the same model year-round, which will be another improvement, Opitz said.

So the forecast won't necessarily be more accurate with ESP, but it will give you a more explicit understanding of the variability surrounding that forecast? Boyce asked. That's correct, Opitz replied.

##### ***5. Comments on Draft 2003 Water Management Plan.***

Comments were due September 6, Hlebechuk said; we received comments from NMFS, Oregon, USFWS and Reclamation. The NMFS, Oregon and Fish and Wildlife Service comments have been posted to the TMT website, said Scott Boyd; we probably won't post the Reclamation comments, because they're considered internal comments.

Boyd said some of the comments have already been incorporated into the final draft of the Plan; others have not, and he has sent out a variety of clarifying emails on some of the unincorporated comments. Again, said Hlebechuk, the plan is to post the final draft of the 2003 Water Management Plan on the TMT website by September 30. Boyce said ODEQ will be commenting on the Water Quality Plan (Appendix 4); he said he will contact Russell Harding, because comments are due to Dick Cassidy by September 25.

##### ***6. Libby Winter Operations for Burbot.***

Bob Hallock of the Fish and Wildlife Service said that, essentially, the goal of this operation is to achieve lower Libby outflows during the period of December 15 through January 31 in support of burbot spawning. Flows would range 4 Kcfs and 10.7 Kcfs; hopefully flows would be around lower than, 7.3 Kcfs, Hallock said. The usual caveats would stay in place in terms of power or flood control needs overriding the burbot operation, he said, adding that an SOR covering the burbot operation will be available by the end of September. Essentially, we wanted to talk about this today so that we can get it into the 2003 Water Management Plan, said Scott Bettin.

Hallock asked Boyd to send him an email describing what additional information is needed so he can submit a detailed written description of the burbot operation, for inclusion in the Water Management Plan, ahead of the formal SOR. Again, Hallock said, we'll submit the SOR to the action agencies as soon as it is available.

In response to a question from Silverberg, Hallock said burbot are not currently listed, but are proposed for listing – the Fish and Wildlife Service has until March 1 to respond to the listing proposal.

Flood control operations are always the sticking point with the burbot operation, Hlebechuk said; she noted that the Corps has developed a fall/winter forecast for Libby, which hopefully will provide some insight into our flood control needs at Libby this winter. That forecast will be available on November 1, Hlebechuk said. Kyle Martin noted that El Niño conditions are expected to persist into the winter, so runoff will likely be below normal, at least through the early part of the winter season. He asked that the Corps take the Southern Oscillation Index into account in its forecast.

This is definitely an issue we'll have to wrestle with, said Bettin; burbot operations have an impact on the sturgeon pulse and on salmon flows later in the season. Boyce added that any forecast that comes out in November is unlikely to be very reliable, so will need to be taken with a grain of salt.

The group discussed the relative legal importance of operations for burbot, which are proposed for listing, and operations for salmon and sturgeon, which are already listed. The Fish and Wildlife Service is discussing the issue with NMFS and the action agencies, Hallock replied; even if they're not currently listed, depending on the court ruling, burbot could become a part of the settlement agreement.

It sounds as though this is definitely going to be an ongoing issue, Silverberg said; we'll hear more at the September 25 TMT meeting. In response to a question, it was agreed that a presentation from IDFG on burbot life-history and on how the changes to the Kootenai River have affected this species would be helpful.

### ***7. Alternatives for Spring Creek Hatchery Releases.***

David Wills said that, as requested at the last TMT meeting, he had found the report on the 1980 Spring Creek barging study conducted by NMFS. The bottom line of this study is the table that shows hatchery recoveries at the homing site and as strays to other hatcheries of fall chinook and coho salmon from the 1980 Spring Creek and

Willard NFH homing experiments; the test results showed fish from the two barge treatments straying at a rate of 74% and 72%, respectively. The inference from this information is that the fish that were barged, although they survived well, strayed a lot, Wills said. He added, however, that 1980 was the year Mt. St. Helens erupted, so the conditions these fish encountered in the estuary were far from typical.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to this information. Ultimately, Wills said the Fish and Wildlife Service is concerned about the potential for straying, given the BiOp language specifying the acceptable rate of straying, if the Spring Creek fish were to be barged; the Service's preference continues to be to release those fish at the hatchery, and to rely on spill to move them past Bonneville Dam.

Given the test parameters, as well as the unusual conditions in the estuary due to the volcanic eruption, said Bettin, it might be a good idea to test barging again. If you want to test barging again, if you can gather enough regional support, anything can be tested, Wills replied; however, it would be the Service's preference not to go there. Boyce observed that there would likely be serious issues for several parties to U.S. v. Oregon if barging the Spring Creek fish becomes a management option receiving serious consideration.

If this is off the table as an option, said Bettin, what other options are you considering? Barging is not off the table for Washington, said Shane Scott; the most important issue for us is getting the fish safely past the dam. What about hatchery facilities downstream from the dam? Bettin asked. Again, that would require serious discussion among the U.S. v. Oregon parties, Wills said – we are discussing a variety of options with the U.S. v. Oregon parties, and we will report back once there is some information to present. I can tell you that this issue is being taken seriously by U.S. v. Oregon, he said; however, it is safe to say that there will be no changes in place before next season. That is my understanding as well, Boyce said.

What is Bonneville's official position on spill for the 2003 Spring Creek Hatchery release? Boyce asked. We are highly unlikely to support it, Bettin replied – it is possible that involuntary spill will occur during that time, but I wouldn't count on it – hence the six months notice we're giving you to consider alternative management scenarios. Paul Wagner observed that it might be possible to use chilled water to slow the development of the eyed eggs such that they are ready for release after the spill season begins.

In response to a request from Silverberg, Wills reiterated that he will report back on this topic as soon as more information is available.

#### ***8. Presentation by BPA on Financial Decisions.***

This presentation was deferred until a future TMT meeting.

#### ***9. Current System Conditions.***

With respect to the status of the fish migration, Wagner reported that subyearling migration is essentially over; numbers at Lower Granite are down in the hundreds, although there was an uptick to the 1,000-2,000 range last week. At McNary, the indices

have been running 1,000-2,000 per day; Bonneville has been averaged less than 1,000 fish per day. Wagner added that the total number of smolts passing McNary in 2002 was in excess of 8 million.

Moving on to adult fall chinook passage numbers, Wagner said the season-to-date total at Bonneville is almost 314,000, with nearly 20,000 fish per day continuing to pass the project. The 10-year average is about 125,000, and includes the last two years, both excellent years. With respect to adult steelhead, about 106,000 have passed the project to date, up from a 10-year average of 75,000. Jack chinook counts are about 15,000 to date, slightly higher than the 10-year average of 12,000.

At Ice Harbor, things get interesting, Wagner said – a total of 6,200 adult spring chinook have passed that project, compared to a 10-year average of 1,400. Passage numbers continue to be high – 300-400 fish per day, at least partly in response to better temperature conditions this year. Wagner also touched on adult passage numbers at Lower Monumental and Little Goose, noting that numbers have continued high at those projects as well. At Lower Granite, 3,651 fall chinook have passed the project to date, compared to a 10-year average of 472. Adult steelhead passage has also shown a dramatic increase this year at Lower Granites, Wagner said; the question now becomes, will we see a dramatic drop-off in passage now that Dworshak outflow is going to minimum?

Wagner noted that water temperatures in the Lower Snake have been remarkably cool this year; the current temperature in the Lower Granite forebay is about 66 degrees F. Tailwater readings have been a consistent 3-4 degrees less than the forebay readings, he added.

Moving on to reservoir operations, Hlebechuk said Libby continues to release 6 Kcfs; the Corps has received several calls from outfitters saying flows are too low, and need to be brought up to 9 Kcfs. I told them that 6 Kcfs had been coordinated at TMT and suggested that they call Jim Litchfield, Hlebechuk said. The current elevation at Libby is 2441.8, she added.

Albeni Falls is currently at elevation 2062.2, and we will start drafting that project in mid-September, Hlebechuk continued. The winter elevation at Albeni Falls is 2055 by November 15; we can only draft one foot at Albeni Falls by the end of September, she said. Dworshak, again, is at elevation 1520.2 and ramping down to minimum flow by 1 a.m. Thursday. At Lower Granite, the day-average flow was 23 Kcfs yesterday, and 25 Kcfs, on average, over the last seven days. Flows at McNary averaged 121 Kcfs yesterday; at Bonneville, 109 Kcfs, up from a seven-day average of 104 Kcfs.

John Roche of Reclamation reported that Hungry Horse is now at elevation 3542, continuing to release 4 Kcfs. Hungry Horse was at 3544.7 on August 31, 107 kaf above its usual end-of-summer elevation of 3540 feet. We expect to have that additional volume out by the end of September, Roche said. Grand Coulee is at 1285.1 feet, currently.

There are no problems to report with the power system, said Bettin, although there have been some fires under the power lines in California. With respect to water

quality, Tina Lundell of the Corps said there have been no TDG exceedences since late August; the spill season is now over. Water temperatures are cooling down everywhere except Ice Harbor, John Day and The Dalles, where temperatures have been slightly above the 68-degree standard at times.

#### ***10. New System Operational Requests.***

No new SORs were submitted prior to today's meeting.

#### ***11. Recommended Operations.***

Hlebechuk said system operations will continue in their current mode for the foreseeable future.

#### ***12. Other.***

***A. Tribal Fisheries.*** Kyle Martin said the compliance statistics for the fall tribal treaty fishery, in terms of the percentage of the hours in which the action agencies have provided the operation requested by the tribes in CRITFC's most recent SOR, have been surprisingly poor to date; he said CRITFC has sent a letter to the Corps expressing the tribes' displeasure with this fact. He asked that the action agencies try to do a better job during the last weeks of the season.

Martin said there will likely be another CRITFC SOR requesting continued fishery operations, because fish numbers continue to be higher than expected. The Compact is meeting today, and will likely extend the season by one to two weeks. Hlebechuk said her understanding is that Bonneville pool has been operated within elevation 75 and 76.5 feet, but said she will check on that. Boyce said ODFW would also like to see the SOR conditions implemented; this is the single most important tribal fishery in many years, and Oregon would like to see all possible flexibility used by Bonneville and the action agencies to implement this request.

The message you're giving is somewhat conflicting, said Bettin; it appears that the tribal fishers will likely catch their full quota under the compact. It seems to me that our objective is to allow you an opportunity to meet the compact catch limit, and we're doing that, yet you've come to the table today to tell us what a poor job we're doing implementing the SOR. We haven't caught the limit yet, said Martin; it is a policy sticking point with the tribes. Bettin asked whether there would be an opportunity to go out and observe tribal fishing; Martin said he will check with CRITFC's policy and legal staffs to see if that would be possible.

#### ***13. Next TMT Meeting Date.***

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Wednesday, September 25 in Portland. It was agreed to ask IDFG's Vaughn Paragamian to make his burbot presentation at this meeting. The TMT's October meetings were set for October 8 at 1 p.m. (a change) and October 23. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

## TMT ATTENDANCE LIST

September 11, 2002

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Ron Boyce	ODFW
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Shane Scott	WDFW
Kyle Martin	CRITFC
Scott Boyd	COE
David Wills	USFWS
Russ George	WMCI
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Colin Beam	PPM
Scott Bettin	BPA
Mike O'Bryant	CBB
Ruth Burris	PGE
Tina Lundell	COE
Steve Pettit	IDFG
John Roche	USBR
Margaret Filardo	FPC
Mike Buchko	Powerex
Richelle Harding	D. Rohr & Associates
Vaughn Paragamian	IDFG
Harold Opitz	RFC

## COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

### TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

September 11, 2002

## FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY 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.

### **9/11 Remembrance:**

After introductions, the COE presented a slide show in memory of the events of last September 11.

### **Dworshak Update:**

Cathy Hlebechuk updated the group on Dworshak operations. Flows were reduced at midnight on 9/10, as decided during a TMT conference call on 9/9. The Nez Perce Tribe and CRITFC thanked the COE for helping to meet their needs with this operation.

### **New River Forecast Center Products:**

Harold Opitz, RFC, has developed a new web page that includes tools that TMT members have expressed an interest in over the past year. Products include a map with sites pertinent to TMT discussions, a summary of different products for monthly and annual run-offs, and a verification page. Harold will notify the group when the web page is available. Also, the SSAR model will be replaced soon by an “ESP” model, which Harold said should give a more realistic picture of forecast variability.

### **2003 WMP Comments:**

USFWS, BOR, Oregon and NMFS comments on the WMP were sent to the COE. Comments from NMFS, Oregon and USFWS are posted on the TMT website. Scott Boyd, COE, made some changes to the draft after receiving comments. The final draft should be posted by September 20. The hope is to finalize the document by the end of September. Some comments may be submitted through the WQT and will be included in the document. Dick Cassidy, COE, is the contact person for the WQT.

### **Tribal Treaty Fishery:**

CRITFC sent a letter to the COE expressing concerns over compliance with the tribal fishery agreement. The concern is that pool elevations have not remained as stable as agreed on. The COE feels that it has met the terms of the operating agreement. Oregon supports CRITFC in their desire to implement the request. Kyle Martin said CRITFC will distribute an SOR today or tomorrow requesting a week to two-week extension of the tribal fishing season.

### **Libby Winter Operations for Burbot:**

Bob Hallock, USFWS, updated TMT on an upcoming SOR for burbot operations. The SOR should be out by the end of September, and USFWS would like to include the SOR in the WMP.

**Action:** Bob will send an explanation of the request to Scott Boyd to include in the WMP as a placeholder.

Cathy Hlebechuk said the COE fall forecast for Libby might help the group in making operating decisions and in planning for the burbot issue. The COE will give a presentation on forecast modeling at a future TMT meeting. The USFWS and NMFS are working together to find a balance between operations for ESA-listed and non-listed fish. Discussions on this issue will continue at subsequent TMT meetings.

**Alternatives for Spring Creek Hatchery Releases:**

Dave Wills, USFWS, presented information on a barging study done in 1980 for fall Chinook. Given the results from the study, the USFWS would prefer not to use barging techniques as an alternative for Spring Creek hatchery releases. Oregon and NMFS agree with USFWS. Washington and BPA would like to see another test done, considering that the study in 1980 was conducted during the Mt. St. Helens eruption. As of yet, there have been no other alternatives offered from USFWS. Conversations are occurring between the parties involved in US v. Oregon. Dave will update TMT when new information is available.

**Review Current System Conditions:**

**Fish Status:** Paul Wagner, NMFS, reported that smolts are nearly gone and there are record numbers of adults in the system.

**Reservoir Operations:** Cathy Hlebechuk and John Roache reported on operations at the COE and BOR projects. Albeni Falls is expected to begin drafting around mid-September.

**Power Status:** Scott Bettin, BPA, reported that fires in California that caused power lines to go down put some strain on the power system, but ultimately caused no problems for the system.

**Water Quality:** Tina Lundel, COE, reported that there have been no TDG exceedances since August 20 and there are currently no spill operations except for some minor spill occurring at Bonneville. Temperatures are normal and cooling.

**Next Meeting, September 25:**

**Agenda Items:**

- Chum Discussions
  - Answers to Questions from 9/3 – OR, WA, USFWS
  - Five Alternative Chum Operations from 9/13 Meeting – COE
  - Plan for '02-'03 Chum Operations
- Emergency Protocols – COE
- Burbot SOR
- BPA Financial Choices
- Power House II Corner Collector Impacts on Flows
- Burbot Life History Presentation – USFWS
- Libby November/December Forecast

**Other:**

- The October face-to-face TMT meeting has been rescheduled for Tuesday, October 8, from 1-4 pm.
- There will be a TMT field trip to Bonneville in mid-November to look at chum spawning grounds.
- Donna Silverberg will reserve an off-site location for the annual “Lessons Learned” meeting. Potential locations are OMSI, CRITFC, or RFC.
- The Facilitation Team will distribute a services evaluation form and request that each member fill it out completely and honestly, and return it to us as quickly as possible. Thank you!
- The Lake Roosevelt Forum is planning a conference for April 21-23 on “Economic Development”. They have requested that the TMT meeting be held in Spokane during the conference.