

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
CONFERENCE CALL NOTES**

April 17, 2003

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

1. Greeting and Introductions

The April 17 Technical Management Team conference call to discuss SOR 2003-8 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.

2. SOR 2003-8.

On April 17, the action agencies received System Operational Request 2003-8. This SOR, supported by USFWS, IDFG, ODFW, WDFW and CRITFC, requests the following specific operations:

Limit flow fluctuations at Priest Rapids as described below:

- When Priest Rapids daily discharge is between 36 and 80 Kcfs, limit flow fluctuations to no more than 10 Kcfs in a 24-hour period.
- When Priest Rapids daily discharge is between 80 and 110 Kcfs, limit flow fluctuations to no more than 10 Kcfs in a 24-hour period.
- When Priest Rapids discharge is between 110 Kcfs and 140 Kcfs, limit fluctuations to no more than 20 Kcfs in a 24-hour period.
- When Priest Rapids daily discharge is between 140 Kcfs and 170 Kcfs, limit fluctuations to no more than 20 Kcfs in a 24-hour period.
- When Priest Rapids daily discharge is above 170 Kcfs, limit fluctuations to no more than 20 Kcfs in a 24-hour period.

The full text of this SOR is available via hot-link from today's agenda on the TMT homepage. Please refer to this document for full details and justification.

David Wills of the Fish and Wildlife Service spent a few minutes going through the specifics of the SOR, noting that its purpose is to minimize stranding and entrapment of Hanford Reach juvenile fall chinook, given the concern about increased fish losses this year.

CRITFC's Bob Heinith said Paul Hoffarth of WDFW is in the process of developing new Hanford Reach loss estimates based on the field crews' survey work last week; he added that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is also sending a letter of support for this SOR because of the importance of this stock to the Alaska fishery. Heinith said he had been out on the Hanford Reach on April 12 with a party that included tribal representatives as well as a FERC

commissioner, and was amazed at the number of stranded fish he saw everywhere, with some entrapments as much as a third of a mile from the river. Researchers believe all of the fish in all but the largest of these entrapments die due to thermal stress and dewatering, he added. We're now heading into peak emergence, Heinith said; the majority of an estimated 35 million juvenile chinook will then be susceptible to stranding. With that in mind, Heinith said, we would really like to see the action agencies limit flow fluctuations from Priest Rapids.

Scott Bettin noted that Priest Rapids is not a federal project; the federal operators have no authority to implement the flow fluctuation limitations requested in SOR 2003-8. He added that the current forecast is for daily average flows at Priest Rapids of 110 Kcfs today, 100 Kcfs tomorrow, 90 Kcfs on Saturday, 70 Kcfs on Sunday and 110 Kcfs on Monday. He noted that power peaking at Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph actually helps limit flow fluctuations at Priest Rapids; however, Grant County PUD operates Priest Rapids, and it's up to them what comes out of that project. Frankly, he said, I'm not sure why we're having a TMT conference call to discuss this issue, given that fact. Bettin added that his understanding is that Grant County is unwilling to commit flow bands smaller than those stipulated in the current Hanford Reach Fish Protection Agreement.

Still, you could release more water from Grand Coulee, Heinith said -- that would help Grant County maintain higher Priest Rapids outflow. Bettin replied that another recently-received SOR, 2003-7, requests no additional flow for listed species at this time; releasing additional storage from Grand Coulee would conflict with SOR 2003-7. Heinith noted that CRITFC does not agree that the flow bands in this year's fish protection agreement are adequate; they are approximately twice as wide as the flow bands specified in SOR 2003-8.

It sounds as though CRITFC and the salmon managers feel this would be a better operation for fish, Silverberg said; however, it doesn't sound as though the TMT is really the place to come to resolution on this issue. Is there another avenue the salmon managers should pursue? Unless we get more flow out of the federal projects, Heinith replied, we won't have a basis from which to ask Grant County to implement this SOR.

What are your fish protection goals? Bettin asked. We want to minimize stranding and mortality in the Hanford Reach, Heinith replied. In the absence of specific objectives, said Bettin, it's hard to know how to respond. Grant PUD made it clear as recently as Wednesday's TMT meeting that they are unwilling to commit to any narrower flow bands than those in the Hanford stranding agreement, said Tony Norris; even if more water is released from Grand Coulee, Grant County is still going to fluctuate Priest Rapids outflow. He suggested that the salmon managers speak directly to Grant County PUD. We intend to, but we need the federal operators to agree to provide an adequate base flow from Grand Coulee before we approach Grant County, Heinith replied. If we release more water from Grand Coulee, the flow fluctuations at Priest Rapids will be even larger, Norris observed -- that will only make the problem worse.

Again, said Bettin, the implementation of this SOR is not within our control. And you're unwilling to increase the base flow from Grand Coulee? Heinith asked. Absolutely, Bettin replied -- it would contradict what SOR 2003-7 is asking Reclamation to do for listed fish. If you

won't increase the base flow from Grand Coulee, we won't have a basis from which to approach Grant County PUD, said Heinith. Again, I'm not convinced that increasing the base flow from Grand Coulee is going to solve this problem, Norris replied.

Paul Wagner suggested that a direct dialogue with Grant County PUD would probably be the most constructive way to proceed with this issue. Henriksen noted that, when flows from Grand Coulee are 70 Kcfs, there are no fluctuations at Priest Rapids – isn't that a more desirable operation, from a biological standpoint? It's the drop from 110 Kcfs to 70 Kcfs that strands and kills fish, Heinith replied. Norris observed that SOR 2003-8 makes no reference to operations at Grand Coulee.

Shane Scott noted that, while the action agencies are saying increased discharge from Grand Coulee would not help implement this SOR, Grant County is saying it is a base flow issue, and is pointing the finger back at the action agencies. It would be worthwhile if we could find out where the truth really lies, he said.

We're hearing loud and clear, then, that the action agencies are unwilling to implement this SOR, said Heinith; we'll take it up the food chain from here. Actually, what I'm hearing is that there is nothing the action agencies can implement in this SOR – it's a Grant County PUD issue, said Silverberg. However, if the action agencies increase the base flow from Grand Coulee, there will be no question that it is Grant County PUD's decision that is causing the stranding and mortality, Heinith said -- given the fact that they are facing a major FERC relicensing process, that would merit significant consideration on their part. However, the TMT would have done everything it can to prevent that stranding and mortality from occurring, Heinith said.

After a few minutes of further discussion, Heinith said he is willing to discuss this SOR with Grant County PUD, although in the absence of an agreement to increase base flows from Grand Coulee, those discussions are extremely unlikely to bear fruit. Henriksen reiterated that, if flows through the reach are higher, the flow bands at Priest Rapids would be even larger, under the Hanford Reach Fish Protection Agreement. If Grant County PUD says they're willing to implement SOR 2003-7 if the base flow from Grand Coulee is increased, would the federal operators reconsider their decision? Heinith said. If it can be done at no cost to us, we would be willing to release additional storage from Grand Coulee, Bettin replied – Grant County would probably need to send us some energy during the following week.

In response to a question from Silverberg, Wills said he would prefer to see flatter, but not increased, outflow from Grand Coulee. Scott said he would prefer to see Grand Coulee operated to meet its BiOp requirements. Steve Pettit said his understanding was that SOR 2003-7 would not require additional water from Grand Coulee. Wagner said NOAA Fisheries is not a party to this SOR because they have agreed to work with Grant County PUD through a separate process; that's why we convened a conference call with Grant last week, he said.

Given that clarification, said Silverberg, it sounds as though the only course of action left is to sit down with Grant County and see whether they would be willing to implement SOR 2003-7 with the flows that will be coming down the system, as Scott Bettin laid them out earlier

in today's conference call. And would it be physically possible for Grant County PUD to use the pondage at Priest Rapids and Wanapum to implement the SOR, given those flows? asked Michele DeHart. Yes, Bettin replied – basically, Grant County would need to provide 20 Kcfs from their pondage on Sunday in order to maintain a level flow on Saturday and Sunday.

It sounds, then, as though, from a technical standpoint, this SOR could be implemented without additional water from Grand Coulee, Silverberg said; in addition, the other salmon managers have said they do not want to see additional Grand Coulee storage used to implement this SOR. Given those facts, she said, it sounds as though a direct conversation between the salmon managers and Grant County PUD would be the logical next step. I'll try to set up a conference call tomorrow morning, said Wagner.

With that, the conference call was adjourned. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.

TMT PARTICIPANT LIST

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