

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

May 7, 2003

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.

Vernita Bar:

Chris Carlson, Grant County PUD, gave an update on Priest Rapids operations and fish monitoring for the last two weeks. End of emergence occurred on April 27 based on biological criteria set out in the Vernita Bar settlement agreement. The information he shared is posted on the TMT web site and was distributed in handouts at the meeting.

Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported on a meeting with the Vernita Bar parties (Feds, States, Tribes and PUD's) that was held May 1 to discuss the possibility of adding an article to the FERC license about Grant PUD's fry emergence protection program. WDFW offered an alternative proposal, which takes a more conservative approach to Priest Rapids operations. Grant County was not willing at this point to adopt the proposal, as the difference between the proposal and the current program was too great. Data is being collected and may be part of future negotiations. Though the group did not reach agreement on this, Paul reported that Grant County will move forward with their license process and open the proposal up for comment.

Water Management Plan Spring/Summer Update:

The WMP Spring Summer Update is nearly final. A suggestion was made to change the "Hanford Reach Agreement" section to "Hanford Reach Operating Plan" to better reflect the latest discussions on this issue. Also, CRITFC (and any other) comments will be appended to the Update and posted on the web.

Fish Spill Status and Tracking:

Laura Hamilton, COE, reported that there have been 22 TDG exceedances during the past two weeks, due to: high TDG levels from the Mid-Columbia, 'best professional judgment', requests from fish managers, lack of information, and environmental uncertainties.

Cindy Henriksen explained that the COE reads the Biological Opinion as spill *up to* the gas cap and consider gas standards as the absolute cap. Thus, the COE operates to stay at or below the gas cap. The Salmon Managers agreed in the desire to meet state and federal water quality standards. However, as expressed in a letter signed by NOAA, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, USFWS and CRITFC, they would like to see the COE take a more aggressive approach in reaching the gas cap as often as possible.

ACTION: Paul Wagner will make a site visit to the RCC to observe the process for implementing spill and monitoring TDG. State fish managers will coordinate with their water quality counterparts regarding the desires expressed in the letter. There will be an update at a later TMT meeting on internal discussions between state representatives and Paul's site visit.

SOR 2003-7:

The Action Agencies will make efforts to continue to meet 135 kcfs flow at Priest Rapids for the next two weeks and continue to consider refill of Grand Coulee as the first priority. This issue will be revisited at the May 14th TMT meeting.

SOR 2003-9:

An emergency TMT meeting was held last week to discuss SOR 2003-9 regarding flows out of Dworshak. At the meeting, members agreed to meet the request and revisit the issue at today's meeting. Given the most recent data for volumes at Dworshak (based on the COE's May final forecast), the Action Agencies pointed out that there may only be enough water in the system to continue the operation for 10-17 days. Dave Statler, Nez Perce Tribe, agreed at Tuesday's FPAC meeting to support maintaining the current operation (~15 kcfs outflows) for another week, but expressed interest in considering future consequences when making management decisions. Jim Litchfield, Montana, agreed and suggested the group consider ramping outflows down sooner to ensure that there is remaining water in June. Idaho, Oregon, Washington, NOAA and USFWS continued to support the proposal in the SOR, due to the large number of fish observed in the system.

ACTION: SOR 2003-9 will be carried out for the next week. The Action Agencies expressed concern that the operation may affect refill and June flows. The Salmon Managers are monitoring the issue closely, will revisit it at the next FPAC meeting, and TMT will revisit Dworshak operations on May 14.

NOAA Spill Criteria:

Paul Wagner presented a memo to TMT from NOAA that listed criteria to consider when making spill/transport decisions. He highlighted that there is no specific trigger given the current data set, but noted that studies are underway that will aid in making transport decisions in future years. Criteria included:

- The trend in the water supply forecast;
- The trend in runoff;
- Environmental conditions;
- Fish conditions;
- Species composition;
- Status of information; and the following added during today's discussions –
- Runoff in the two river systems.

USFWS Memo on Sturgeon Operations at Libby:

Steve Olhausen, USFWS, spoke about the memo that serves as a “heads up”, per request from TMT, to a possible future SOR for sturgeon operations at Libby. The SOR should be out in the next two weeks. Steve suggested that additional questions be directed to Bob Hollock.

SOR 2003-C1: CRITFC Spring Treaty Fishery:

Kyle Martin, CRITFC, shared information on the SOR presented after the April 23 TMT meeting, for operations from April 24-26 to support a tribal fishery. The operation was implemented. Kyle said there may be one more fishery this season and he will try to distribute any requests from CRITFC to the TMT as soon as they are available.

Current System Conditions:

Chum: Shane Scott reported on the status of chum, saying there will be a revised emergence date at the next TMT meeting. He reported that emergence is decreasing and would like to schedule a seining field trip (last week’s trip was postponed) as soon as possible. A Washougal frye release (of over 100,000!) is expected into Duncan Creek next week.

Reservoir Operations: Grand Coulee is at elevation 1276.4’; Hungry Horse is at 3526.5’ and releasing 5600 cfs out; Libby is at 2414’ and filling slightly; and Dworshak is at 1567’ and drafting.

Power: Scott Bettin reported on a number of power outages throughout the system on Monday. Everything is now “back to normal”.

Next Meeting, May 14, 9am-10:30am:

Agenda:

- SOR 2003-7 Priest Rapids operations
- SOR 2003-9 Dworshak operations