

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING NOTES

May 14, 2003

**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 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.

SOR 2003-7:

Dave Wills, USFWS, gave an update on SOR 2003-7, regarding outflows from Priest Rapids and refill of Grand Coulee (the SOR is linked to the TMT agenda on the web page) presented on May 7. FPAC requested that the current regime continues and flows be operated to as close to 135 kcfs as possible in order to stretch the flows for a longer period of time. The Salmon Managers' justification for this request is that the freshet is late this year, showing a similar pattern to 1999 and there remains a need for higher continuous flows for late emerging outmigrants from the Snake and Mid-Columbia.

Rudd Turner presented graphs of Libby April 30-June 1 volume projections based on the May final water supply forecast.

ACTION: Action Agencies will let Salmon Managers know if any threat to Grand Coulee refill arises. They believe the 135 request can be met for the next two weeks.

SOR 2003-9:

Dave Wills reported that FPAC's most recent information concludes that the current Dworshak operation as expressed in SOR 2003-9 (linked to the TMT agenda on the web page) should continue for another week. The Nez Perce Tribe concurred with this conclusion. BPA expressed concerns with putting “all eggs in one basket”, suggesting that there be some back up in case the runoff expected does not occur. If it does not, then refill and summer flow augmentation may be impacted. FPAC shares BPA's concerns and has had extensive discussions over this. Still, the Salmon Managers would like to continue with the operation because of the large salmon run.

The COE presented an alternative operation: 15.5 kcfs through 5/23, then ramp down to 10.5 on the 24th, 7.5 on the 25th, 3.5 on the 26th, and 1.5 beginning on the 27th. BPA

suggested a slower ramp down beginning 5/20 to save some water for later: 5/20 (12 kcfs), 5/21 (10), 5/22 (8), 5/23 (6), 5/24 (4) and 5/25 (1.5).

ACTION: Operations at Dworshak will continue as they are (~15.5 kcfs) for the next week. The Salmon Managers will consider the preferred ramp down rate. TMT will revisit the operation at the May 21st meeting. TMT will discuss DWR operations before then if flows or weather change from predicted conditions.

Chum Emergence:

Shane Scott, Washington, reported that the end of emergence below Ive's Island is expected around May 15. He also reported on the brood stock collection numbers – 221,836 total including 13,500 from Duncan Creek. 56,000 were released on May 8; the remaining will be released next week.

The COE would like to remove or soften the tailwater restriction at Bonneville when chum emergence is complete in order to support the Priest Rapids operation.

ACTION: Shane will check on flows out of Hamilton Creek and their connectivity to the tailwater at Bonneville, as well as how many remaining Chinook redds there are, and how deep they are. He will communicate the information to TMT in the next 24 hours, and if neither issue conflicts with removing the tailwater restriction, it will be removed.

Next Meeting, May 21, 9am-noon:

Agenda:

- SOR 2003-7 Priest Rapids Operations Update
- SOR 2003-9 Dworshak Operations Update
- TDG Monitoring Visit – NOAA
- Transport Criteria – NOAA
- Summary of Tribal Fishery – CRITFC
- Tailwater Operations Below Bonneville Update
- Sturgeon Operations at Libby Update

***NOTE:** *Future meetings are scheduled for: June 4, 18; and July 2, 16, and 30.*

Meeting Minutes

1. Greeting and Introductions

The May 14, 2003 Technical Management Team meeting was chaired by Rudd Turner 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 Cindy Henriksen at 503/808-3945.

2. Update on SOR 2003-7 (Revised), The Libby Volume Forecast (April-June and April-July) and the Hungry Horse Volume Forecast.

SOR 2003-7, received by the action agencies on April 17, covered operations at Priest Rapids, McNary and Grand Coulee Dams. The requested operation has been going forward over the past several weeks. Wills said this SOR was discussed at yesterday's FPAC meeting; at that meeting, the salmon managers agreed that the 135 Kcfs average flow at Priest Rapids be maintained for as long as possible while still ensuring Grand Coulee refill by the July 4 weekend (actual refill of the project will likely occur on June 30). Any additional water over and above that needed to refill Grand Coulee should be shaped into this period, said Paul Wagner; if there isn't any additional volume, however, we should hold the Priest Rapids flow as close to 135 Kcfs as possible in order to prolong the period of 135 Kcfs average flow. Wagner explained that the freshet is somewhat delayed this year, which means a protracted outmigration is likely, hence the request to prolong the period of 135 Kcfs Priest Rapids outflow as long as possible.

Just so it's clear, Grand Coulee refill is the highest priority; if refill starts to be jeopardized, it should take precedence over the Priest Rapids operation? John Wellschlager asked. That's correct, Wills replied.

The group looked at the most recent flow and fish passage information on the DART homepage; Wagner noted that this water year will likely produce peak Lower Granite outflow some time in the last week in May. The peak of the Snake River outmigration can be expected to arrive at the Lower Columbia projects about eight days later, Wagner said. Mary Karen Scullion said that, according to the most recent Corps STP modeling, it should be possible to maintain the 135 Kcfs average flow at Priest Rapids through about June 10 and still refill Grand Coulee by June 30.

Turner directed the group's attention to the most recent Corps volume histograms for Libby, Dworshak and Hungry Horse. He noted that both of the Libby histograms include a sturgeon pulse; one shows the period April 1-June 30; the other shows the April 1-July 31 period. For the first run, there is virtually no augmentation volume in addition to sturgeon volume available if a 50% confidence of refill is assumed; under the second run, again assuming 50% confidence of refill, there would be 561 kaf (283 ksfd) available for summer flow augmentation. What you're saying here is that it is unlikely that Libby will refill by June 30 this year? Boyce asked. Correct, Turner replied. And that flow augmentation volume is in addition to the 7 Kcfs bull trout flow in July? Wagner asked. Correct, Turner replied.

In terms of a resolution on this operation, then, it sounds as though the action agencies will maintain Priest Rapids average flow as close to 135 Kcfs as possible, and will keep everyone informed as to when jeopardy to Grand Coulee refill is imminent, Wellschlager said. I think we're fine for the next two weeks, however, in terms of maintaining the 135 Kcfs at Priest Rapids, Tony Norris said.

3. Update on SOR 2003-9.

SOR 2003-9, received by the action agencies on April 29, requested that the current Dworshak outflow of 15.5 Kcfs-16 Kcfs be maintained until the spring BiOp flow target of 89 Kcfs is reached at Lower Granite Dam. Turner reminded the group that there

was agreement at last week's TMT meeting to continue with the current Dworshak operation at least until it could be revisited at today's meeting.

At yesterday's FPAC meeting, we crunched various numbers, said Wills; based on the information we have right now, with the River Forecast Center now predicting a 2.34 MAF runoff volume at Dworshak, we believe the current Dworshak operation can continue for at least the next week. We feel that, with the snowpack that has accumulated in the past month alone, we can continue the operation for a week without jeopardizing June 30 refill at Dworshak, he said. Kyle Martin said CRITFC and the Nez Perce Tribe concur with this analysis.

Wellschlager reiterated BPA's concern that the salmon managers are putting all of their eggs in one basket; our preference would be to back off flows slightly at this point to build some insurance later in the spring period, he said. We're right on the edge, said Wellschlager; we may have another 10 days left at 15.5 Kcfs outflow from Dworshak before we have to reduce outflow to project minimum discharge and pull the rug out from under the outmigration. Martin replied that according to the weather forecast information he has seen recently, the freshet should begin as soon as next week. The salmon managers discussed this extensively yesterday, Wagner replied; while we share the action agencies' concern, the consensus was that this operation should continue for another week.

Turner said that, according to the most recent Corps STP run, which he said is somewhat conservative, it should be possible to hold 15.5 Kcfs out from Dworshak through May 23. After that, he said, we would likely ramp down to 10.5 Kcfs on Saturday, May 24, then to 7.5 Kcfs on May 25, 3.5 Kcfs on May 26, 1.5 Kcfs starting May 27. That gives us a few more days at 15.5 Kcfs, Turner said, but I must echo BPA that the salmon managers are really taking the forecast literally. Actually, we're hoping for more from the forecast, said Wagner.

What will happen to the smolts if the flows drop dramatically for two days, then come back up – how long can they weather a reduction in Lower Snake flows without seeing a significant biological impact? Wellschlager asked. Such an operation would delay their migration, increasing their travel time and reducing overall survival to some degree, Boyce replied. The problem is that we have high migration numbers currently in the river, and now is not the time to drop flows – we're trying to bridge the gap between the current relatively low flows in the Lower Snake and the beginning of the natural runoff begins, said Boyce.

There are still a large number of listed wild outmigrants in the Salmon River, Wagner added – a large percentage of the populations of concern are still upriver. Both NMFS and IDFG are predicting a record wild chinook and steelhead outmigration this year, said Boyce – it is crucial to keep flows up as long as we can. In response to a question from Wellschlager, Wagner said approximately 50% of the expected 2003 yearling chinook run is thought to have passed Lower Granite to date. Boyce added that, because of the fact that the Lower Granite RSW is believed to be very effective at passing fish, it's hard to say what the cumulative passage graph will look like from here on out.

Wellschlager asked whether the salmon managers would consider a longer rampdown period – perhaps a week, rather than the currently-planned four days. Let’s discuss that at our May 21 meeting, Wills replied. That discussion will likely be about the rampdown, because we’ll be almost out of water at that point, said Turner. If the salmon managers do contemplate extending the period of high flow from Dworshak at the cost of greater risk to Dworshak refill, Turner said, the Corps will need written support from NOAA Fisheries to increase refill risk.

Wellschlager added that, while the salmon managers are within their rights to request the continued 15.5 Kcfs outflow from Dworshak, he also has an obligation to represent Bonneville’s ratepayers, whom the spill at Dworshak is costing \$1 million per week. Wagner noted that the current Corps STP run assumes a runoff volume of 1.9 MAF at Dworshak, rather than the 2.34 MAF predicted in the current River Forecast Center runoff volume forecast. Boyce said the salmon managers will discuss Wellschlager’s suggestion of a more protracted rampdown at their Tuesday FPAC meeting and will discuss the operation with the action agencies on Tuesday afternoon. It may then be possible to begin ramping down Dworshak outflow beginning May 21. The TMT will meet next Wednesday to discuss that operation.

4. Recommended Operations.

Turner said the Corps will continue the current Dworshak operation at least until next Wednesday’s TMT meeting, unless conditions change drastically. If conditions do change, said Turner, we will convene a TMT conference call.

5. Chum Update.

Shane Scott said he had promised to bring a new estimate of the chum emergence date for the chum below Ives Island. The new estimate is May 15, he said. Also, said Scott, there was a program to collect broodstock from the Ives Island spawning grounds and rear those fish as a protected group at Washougal Hatchery; 221,000 fry were produced from the eggs collected this year, including just under 14,000 from the Duncan Creek spawning channels that dried out after spawning. On May 8, 56,000 of those 221,000 chum fry were released from the Skamania Landing boat launch; the remaining fry will be released next week.

So your estimate is that chum emergence will be finished by May 15? Turner asked. Yes, Scott replied. Given that fact, said Turner, the Corps would like to remove the current tailwater restriction below Bonneville once emergence is complete. The problem is that we’re still seeing significant numbers of emerging chinook, Boyce replied. The hard constraint is to protect chum, said Turner; we have no directive to protect chinook, and my understanding is that those fish are being produced from deeper redds. We can check the location of the chinook redds and get back to you, said Scott. Relaxing the Bonneville tailwater restriction will give us more flexibility to meet the 135 Kcfs average flow at Priest Rapids, Wellschlager added. I don’t think it would be an issue for chinook, said Turner; Bonneville tailwater is unlikely to fall below 11.5 feet even over the coming weekend. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that Boyce and

Scott will talk to their field personnel; Scott will provide a response to Turner's request via email by tomorrow.

6. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next Technical Management Team meeting was set for Wednesday, May 21. Additional TMT meetings were scheduled for June 4 and June 18, as well as July 2, 16 and 30. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

**TMT Attendance List
May 14, 2003**

Name	Affiliation
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
David Wills	USFWS
Paul Wagner	NOAA Fisheries
Shane Scott	WDFW
Tony Norris	USBR
Rudd Turner	COE
John Wellschlager	BPA
Mike O'Bryant	Col. Basin Bulletin
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Colin Beam	PPM
Tim Heizenrater	PPM
Tom Haymaker	PNGC
Kevin Nordt	PacifiCorp
Shawn Cradell	NW Energy Consulting
Jim Adams	COE
Russ George	WMCI
Mary Karen Scullion	COE
Kyle Martin	CRITFC
Steve Pettit	IDFG
Dick Lane	BPA
David Benner	FPC
Margaret Filardo	FPC

Ruth Burris	PGE
Craig Sprankle	USBR
Glenn Traeger	Avista
Richelle Beck	D. Rohr & Associates
Martin Hatcher	SCL
Ron Boyce	ODFW
Jim Litchfield	Consultant (Montana)