

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

July 16, 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.

Ice Harbor Spill Test:

Mark Smith, COE, reported on the spill test at Ice Harbor that ended yesterday, which was compared to a similar test done last spring. The data presented today was raw and the results still uncertain. Mark did offer that a higher gate opening may be better for fish. As the data becomes clear, the results will be shared with TMT.

TMT discussed operations at Ice Harbor. NOAA proposed to continue the current operation, alternating bulk and no spill every two days until the results of the spill test is available. BPA proposed an alternative operation, half day spill (10 pm-10 am) and half day no spill (10 am-10 pm). The COE expressed concerns about erosion with bulk spill and would like to conduct a three day survey that would require no spill. The COE agreed to operate some bulk spill for the next week, but would like to revisit the issue next week. The USFWS expressed a desire to spill rather than not spill and will send a letter to TMT on this in the near future. The Service chose not to elevate the issue to IT at this time.

ACTION: A subgroup of TMT representatives met after today's meeting to discuss the details of the Ice Harbor operation, as everyone agreed to an alternating bulk/no spill operation over the next week.

UPDATE (7/17/03): The TMT sub-group consisted of Paul Wagner and Chris Ross (NOAA Fisheries), David Wills (USFWS), Shane Scott (WDFW), Scott Bettin (BPA), and Rudd Turner (COE). The sub-group agreed to 12 hours of bulk spill each night at Ice Harbor Dam, 8pm to 8am, then no spill each day from 8am to 8pm. There is no spill today after the end of the spill test, then bulk spill begins at 8pm tonight, Thu 17 July. There may be no spill for more than 12 hours next week to accommodate hydro surveys of the stilling basin, and this was acceptable to the sub-group. If more than 12 hours of no spill is needed, the sub-group requested that the extra hours occur in the morning rather than in the evening, i.e. start before 8am rather than end after 8pm. Due to concerns about possible stilling basin erosion, the COE's agreement to provide bulk spill operations is temporary, pending results of the hydro survey.

Current System Conditions:

Fish: Paul Wagner, NOAA Fisheries, reported on fish status, saying that there seems to be a decreasing trend in migration. Subyearling Chinook have been observed in significant numbers throughout the system. Snake River Fall Chinook passage peaked on July 1 at Lower Granite. Total numbers of PIT-tagged subyearling fish observed were high (1,064 at Lower Granite). Paul noted that the fish moved quickly through the system during high flows.

Reservoirs: Rudd Turner, COE, reported that Bonneville released 171.6 kcfs yesterday and is experiencing temperatures of 68-69 degrees; McNary was operating at 151.5 kcfs out, 68 degrees in the tailwater; Lower Granite, due to an outage yesterday, saw 23.1 kcfs out and 67-69 degrees; Dworshak is at 1589.2' elevation and releasing 14 kcfs; Libby is at 2458' releasing 14 kcfs; Albeni Falls is at 2062.3' and releasing 16 kcfs. Tony Norris reported Grand Coulee at elevation 1285.4'. Hungry Horse is at 3555.2' and releasing 5 kcfs.

Power system: Scott Bettin, BPA, reported that a line outage was completed at Lower Granite yesterday and everything is back to normal.

Water supply: A July final forecast has been issued from the National Weather Service, indicating below average precipitation this year. Rudd Turner reported that the COE STP run was completed (a handout was provided) showing McNary flows at about 150 kcfs this week, 140 next week, and 130 the following week. The projected summer season flow average is 141 kcfs at McNary and 34 kcfs at Lower Granite.

Montana SOR 2003-MT-1:

Jim Litchfield, Montana, gave a brief overview of the requests laid out in the SOR for operations at Libby and Hungry Horse:

- 1) A more gradual and stable outflow at both projects;
- 2) Support resident fish;
- 3) Reduce the overall draft to 10' by the end of September without going below the bull trout minimum flows;
- 4) Reduce summer spill in the lower river (50 kcfs at Bonneville, 30% of the river flow at The Dalles, and end spill at John Day upon completion of the current spill test).

Jim provided biological justification for this request to TMT from Montana and said that additional information can be found on the NPPC website. Before discussing this SOR, Paul Wagner discussed **SOR 2003-12** that was put forward by NOAA to explore a Libby/Arrow-Duncan water swap. This SOR, he said, would support Montana's request for stable flows at Libby. Scott Bettin updated TMT that BPA has been engaging in formal conversations with Canada on the potential for a swap. So far, Canada is not interested in a swap this year due to lack of available water and reservoir impacts to Canada.

ACTION: BPA will request a formal written response from Canada on this issue at the next TMT meeting.

Paul Wagner said that, absent the proposed swap and a good scientific study on effects of changes to the system, NOAA feels that the requests laid out by Montana cannot be

achieved this year. NOAA supports continuing with the current Biological Opinion operation. NOAA is willing to engage in a regional study plan for Libby and Hungry Horse for future years and examine the effects of changes to the system and benefits/impacts on salmon.

The COE provided a model run of STP flows vs. the Montana SOR as requested at the last TMT meeting. The COE expressed concern that the requested operation would begin far below the flow objective and they are not supportive of this. They encouraged NOAA, Montana and others to engage in long term operation strategy discussions together.

Members of the TMT offered their responses to the Montana request:

Oregon – continue with the Biological Opinion operation and engage in regional discussions to develop a long term evaluation plan; will continue to look for ways to support Montana’s request through a swap or other action.

Idaho – convene a consensus group to develop a test for Montana’s request for 2004, and continue with the current operation for this year.

USFWS – regional buy-in is needed to change the operation so that it does not create a dispute. Continue with the current operation and develop a plan for 2004.

Washington – the study will be significant and should be conducted by the entire region. For now, continue with the Biological Opinion operation.

BPA – possibly implement some of the spill reductions requested; continue to examine the request as the season continues through regional discussions.

BOR – support NOAA’s recommendation.

COE – plans to increase Libby discharge this weekend to get closer to 20’ below full by the end of August; attempt to meet Biological Opinion summer flow objective at McNary and would like to see a regional evaluation.

Given today’s discussion, Montana requested that the issue be elevated to IT and deferred to next week to allow further discussions to occur. The question to IT is: Should the recommendations on page 2 of SOR 2003-MT-1 be implemented in 2003?

The IT call is currently scheduled for next Thursday, 7/24 at 1 pm. The meeting will be held at NOAA in the First floor conference room, and the call-in number is 503-326-7672.

Dworshak Operations:

Bill Muir, NMFS Science Center, presented the latest information on Fall Chinook studies from 1995-2002. A handout was provided – see the handout for conclusions of the study. A TMT member asked if late migrant fish are bigger, and if this could be the reason for better survival?

Paul Wagner offered additional information on current fish conditions. July 1 was the peak passage date for Fall Chinook at Lower Granite. It appears that the fish are passing earlier this year so there may be an opportunity, from one perspective, to alter operations to support other migrating fish (in the Clearwater). Another perspective is to continue

with operations as in the past to support fish from mid- to the end of July. Kyle Martin (CRITFC) said that the Nez Perce Tribe would like to see flows cut back after high temperatures subside after this weekend and not during those high temperatures, and get Dworshak to 1535' at the end of August, in order to benefit Clearwater fish.

ACTION: TMT agreed to operate Dworshak at 14 kcfs for one more week and check in during a TMT conference call next Wednesday, July 23.

ACTION: TMT will also review and discuss, during the 7/23 call, a memo from Billy Connor, USFWS, that gives an explanation of his data (the memo was distributed today).

Implementation Plan '04-08:

Ken Barnhardt, BOR, reported that the Action Agencies are soliciting feedback on the '04-'08 one- and five- year Implementation Plans before a draft plan is distributed. There is also a three year check in that will be conducted simultaneously. The Action Agencies would like input by the end of July and hope to finalize the Plan in September. A handout was provided with information on what type of input is being solicited and who to respond to.

Scott Boyd also noted that the COE one- and five- year Water Management Plans are being developed – TMT members should look for a draft one year plan in August.

TDG Tracking Update:

Jim Adams, COE, reported that there were some TDG exceedances from July 1-14, mostly at McNary and due to sharp temperature increases, possibly related to IHR spill. The COE is managing these exceedances as best as possible.

Develop Recommended Operations:

Rudd Turner summarized operations for the next week:

- Dworshak will hold at 14 kcfs;
- Libby will increase to 18 kcfs on 7/20; and
- Ice Harbor will continue an alternating spill/no spill pattern, the specifics of which will be determined by a subgroup of TMT (*See earlier note*).

CRITFC Comments on Fishery:

Kyle Martin, CRITFC, commented on the latest summer treaty fishery, which ended today. There was a drop in outflow which was due to transmission problems. Kyle said there will likely not be another summer Chinook fishery request this year.

Next Meeting, Conference Call, Wednesday July 23, 9 am:

Next week's conference call will be held to discuss Dworshak operations.