

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

October 8, 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.

Hamilton Creek Rating Curve:

Representatives from the Portland District COE presented information on a monitoring gage located at Hamilton Creek. Pete Dickerson explained that because the channel is dynamic, it is not the best location for getting a rating curve. The Portland District COE is looking to the TMT to find out what the team desires. TMT said they need to know when passage to Hamilton Creek is open, what the depth is and what fluctuations are occurring. A number of options were expressed, including: using a web cam on the bridge; surveying the cross section after a rain event to be certain the transponders are working; and tracking elevations and posting the information on the TMT web page.

ACTION: TMT will revisit the Hamilton Creek gage issue and make a recommendation at the October 22nd TMT meeting, after the Salmon Managers (some of which were not present today) have a chance to discuss the options laid out today.

Update on Albeni Falls/Lake Pend Oreille Operations:

Dave Wills, USFWS, presented SOR 2003-FWS-01, which recommended that Lake Pend Oreille be lowered to elevation 2051' this year to support a ten year study that evaluates the effects of the lake's elevation on kokanee and bull trout. The USFWS coordinated with Idaho Fish and Game and NOAA Fisheries on the issue before developing the recommendation. TMT provided an opportunity for the Lake Pend Oreille Commission to give input as well. Questions and comments raised from TMT representatives and others are summarized below:

- **Idaho Fish and Game:** Because the adult kokanee population is expected to be low this year, IDFG supports the lower lake level this year, then raising it during the following two years to support a healthier stock of fish.
- **BPA:** From a power/economic standpoint, BPA prefers the 2051' elevation.
- **COE:** Is there a study protocol? There are no hard numbers for levels for the lake.
- **NOAA:** The study requires two years at 2051' for accurate and beneficial data. Only one year has been collected. This year, with low numbers of adults and downstream needs factoring in, appears to be ideal to get the data without doing harm to one and while benefiting the other.
- **Lake Pend Oreille Commission:** The Commission supports higher elevations. Spokesperson Ford Elsaesser asked for the opportunity to put the Commission's request (for elevation 2055') in writing to TMT and to participate in follow-up discussions on this issue. The Commission has a desire to benefit warm water species, recreational use of the lake, and the higher level provides a substantial benefit to the

community. The Commission was created by the Legislature to represent water quality and quantity issues, and to provide input on decisions regarding lake operations.

ACTION: The COE will target elevation 2055-2056' by the end of October until further discussion at the October 22nd TMT meeting.

ACTION: The Lake Pend Oreille Commission will send information to the COE or the facilitation team to forward on to the TMT.

Lower Granite End of MOP:

The USFWS recommended that, unless there were compelling reasons to do otherwise, MOP operations be held until the end of transport (end of October), as there are still subyearling Chinook coming from the Clearwater. Holding the project at MOP would support the needs of the Nez Perce tribe. NOAA Fisheries said that the Biological Opinion requires the Lower Granite pool to be held low until the reservoir has cooled, and this requirement has been met. Therefore, they saw no Biological Opinion requirement to keep the pool low. BPA expressed a desire, from an economic standpoint, to remove MOP restrictions at the project because the higher head allows for more generation.

ACTION: TMT consented to a removal of MOP to allow for full range operations at Lower Granite with a soft constraint for lower elevations. Also, the COE's teletype will note the Salmon Managers' preference to operate at a lower range if possible.

Update on Spring Creek Spill:

Dave Wills, USFWS, reported on the work of a subgroup that is discussing Spring Creek hatchery issues and alternative solutions that would eliminate a need for March releases. A B2 corner collector will go on line in March 2004; the USFWS is working with the COE to possibly do hydro acoustic monitoring work this year. TDG waiver requests have been submitted to Oregon DEQ and exemption requests have been sent to Washington DOE to keep all options on the table. As yet, no decisions have been made on operations for Spring Creek but the group is trying to find a creative solution. Dave will continue to update TMT on this issue.

System Status:

Chum: The 2002 chum report is now available. Nearly 20,000 fish were indexed on the Washington side, which is 10 times the average!! TMT will look for more information on chum at the next TMT meeting.

ACTION: The facilitation team will contact Ron Boyce to give a report on chum at the 10/22 TMT meeting.

Reservoirs: Dworshak is operating just above minimum flows, at 1.7 kcfs. There is a need to continue slightly higher flows to reduce cavitation of pumps for the hatchery; this should have a minimal impact on refill. The project is currently at elevation 1517.4'. Libby is at elevation 2433.5' and releasing 4-4.6 kcfs out. Albeni Falls is at 2059.3' and drafting, releasing 16 kcfs. For now, the target for Albeni Falls is elevation 2055-2056' for the end of October. John Day is operating at a 2.5' range. Lower Granite will go to

minimum outflows in October due to a number of line outages scheduled. Grand Coulee is at elevation 1288'. Hungry Horse is drafting to meet Columbia Falls and is currently at elevation 3534'.

Water Management Plan Update:

Scott Boyd, COE, reported that comments on the 2004 WMP have been received from CRITFC, Oregon and Idaho. The plan should be finalized by the October 22nd TMT meeting. Scott will provide an update at that time.

Year End Review Topics:

TMT members reviewed and narrowed a draft list of year end review topics. The review is scheduled for November 5th, 10am-3pm. The revised topic list is as follows:

1. Temperature/water and runoff patterns, comparison to previous years – COE
2. Lower Granite study; RSW results – COE Walla Walla
3. Snake River operations – BPA
4. TDG level variations: criteria for modifications to spill – COE
5. Fall Chinook survival in the Snake River, and vertical distribution of fish in the reservoir relative to temperature – Billy Connor
6. NOAA survival study: results of the reach survival evaluations for 2003 and comparison to previous year – NOAA
7. Performance standards – NOAA
8. Weather review and winter climate forecast – CRITFC
9. Beginning and end of spill: latest update, lessons learned – NOAA
10. Comparison and analysis of fish passage in 2003 compared to other years – FPC
11. Adult returns from the 2001 out-migration (what were impacts of 2001 operations?) – FPC
12. Ice Harbor study results – COE Walla Walla
13. NOAA status review related to LAMBDA

Next Meeting, October 22, 9am-noon:

Agenda items:

- Process chart – Action Agencies
- Autumn treaty fishery – CRITFC
- Lake Pend Oreille update – All
- Hamilton Creek response – Salmon Managers
- Chum report – Oregon
- Spring Creek spill update – USFWS
- Water Management Plan final – COE
- System status

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEETING NOTES
October 8, 2003
CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM
HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON**

TMT Internet Homepage: <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/index.html>

DRAFT

1. Greeting and Introductions

The October 8 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 Cindy Henriksen at 503/808-3945.

2. Hamilton Creek Rating Curve.

The Corps' Pete Dickerson said his agency has installed a gauge in Hamilton Creek, at the first bridge on the Columbia. We were trying to develop a rating curve for this area, he said, but this was not a good location for measuring the stage in the channel. We've been out three times since the gauge was installed, and as you can see by the graphs, the cross-section did not change significantly, while the stage change was 0.3 feet. The other problem we noticed was significant changes in the channel shape following these three events – the gauge was pretty much dry all summer, Dickerson said. Please note that Dickerson's presentation is linked to today's agenda on the TMT homepage; please refer to this document for details.

Essentially, this is a very dynamic stream, said Dickerson; we could try to fill in the flow values in between these various measurement points, but it wouldn't make for a very accurate rating curve. Dickerson showed a series of pictures taken in the field, showing the stream and gauge under various instream flow conditions. The bottom line is that we don't think a rating curve is going to help TMT very much, he said. One thing we can tell you, though, is if there is water in the channel – are there other TMT information needs we might be able to supply? Jim Litchfield suggested that placing a gauge on the bridge would at least tell TMT when water starts flowing to a depth that will allow chum to enter the stream. So are you interested in flow or water depth? Dickerson asked. Depth, Paul Wagner replied. We can keep track of the flow near the gauge and post that to the TMT website, Dickerson said. Another participant suggested that a webcam might be a useful way to track in-stream conditions in real-time.

It sounds, then, as though there is an interest in knowing when passage conditions are open for salmon, in terms of water depth at the entrance to the creek, since the rating

curve isn't going to work, Silverberg said. A webcam is one idea; there is also the possibility of posting information from the gauge. There is also interest in checking the accuracy of the transponder at the site through a field survey following the next rain event, she said. Silverberg said she will ask the salmon managers to discuss the various options laid out today, with the goal of reaching a recommendation at the October 22 TMT meeting.

3. Update on Albeni Falls/Lake Pend Oreille.

On October 7, the action agencies received SOR 2003-FWS-01, covering winter operations at Lake Pend Oreille. This SOR, developed by the Fish and Wildlife Service and coordinated through NOAA Fisheries, requests the following specific operations:

- By November 15, draw Lake Pend Oreille down to elevation 2051 feet to precede significant lake shore spawning by kokanee and subsequent redd dessication or disturbance by wave action, and to redistribute shoreline gravel for subsequent years' spawning. During the winter water year 2005, hold Lake Pend Oreille at elevation 2055 feet to continue the evaluation of the effect of lake level on kokanee spawning success.

David Wills went through the details of this SOR, available via hotlink from today's agenda on the TMT homepage. He noted that there is a conflict between the USFWS bull trout BiOp and the 2000 NMFS BiOp between the water needs of Lake Pend Oreille kokanee and listed salmon downstream. After consulting with NOAA Fisheries, said Wills, this SOR is our operational recommendation – a low lake level in 2003-2004, and a high lake level in 2004-2005. We were unable to reach consensus on a recommended lake level for 2005-2006, Wills said, adding that once the three-year test is concluded, a longer-term Lake Pend Oreille operation will be developed.

Ford Elsaesser of the Idaho Lakes Commission asked about the reasoning behind the need for a low lake level this winter. Wills replied that his understanding is that, given the size of the 2003 kokanee brood, a low lake level will provide adequate spawning habitat and conditions, so some additional water is available for downstream use this fall and winter. Wagner said the purpose of the ongoing evaluation is to determine the effects of the higher and lower Lake Pend Oreille elevations on kokanee spawning in that system; the experimental design calls for alternating years of higher and lower lake level operation.

Jeff Laufle provided a brief historical overview of this 10-year experiment, which began in the winter of 1996-1997. In response to a question, Russ Kiefer said IDFG supports the Fish and Wildlife Service SOR. Scott Bettin said that, because it would provide a \$3 million-\$4 million power benefit, Bonneville also supports drafting Lake Pend Oreille to elevation 2051 this winter. The group also discussed the ongoing efforts to encourage lake trout population reduction in Lake Pend Oreille through liberalized sport and commercial fishing regulations.

The group also discussed the 1997 ISAB review of the 10-year study plan, which supported the need for alternating years of higher and lower lake elevations in order to

conduct a valid study. Ned Horner said IDFG is trying to avoid a collapse in the kokanee and bull trout population, hence the general preference, in Idaho, for a higher lake elevation. Horner agreed, however, that given the size of the 2003 year-class, elevation 2051 should provide adequate spawning and rearing conditions this winter. The group also discussed Flathead Lake operations this winter.

Cathy Hlebechuk said the Corps will operate Lake Pend Oreille to achieve elevation 2055-2056 by October 31; the lake will then be positioned so it could be maintained or drafted to elevation 2051 by November 15, if needed. Silverberg said the TMT will develop that recommendation at its October 22 meeting. Elsaesser said his group intends to provide their input in writing prior to that meeting, and will also participate in the October 22 discussion.

Is there another reason the Commission would like to keep the lake level higher? Bettin asked. The feeling in the community here is that the higher lake level provides a substantial benefit, in terms of better warm-water fishing and recreational conditions, Elsaesser replied, noting that his Commission was recently chartered by the State of Idaho to speak for the state on the operation of Lake Pend Oreille. He said he will provide a list of email contacts for the Commission to the Corps.

4. Recommendations on the End of MOP Operation at Lower Granite.

Wills said that, at yesterday's FPAC meeting, while there was a wide diversity of opinion on this issue, the consensus was to maintain MOP at Lower Granite until the end of the transport season on October 31. In response to a question, Wagner said 400-500 Clearwater juveniles continue to arrive at, and to be transported from, Lower Granite daily. He noted that the BiOp says MOP should be maintained at Lower Granite until natural cooling reduces the temperature in the reservoir; we are now there, he said, so personally, I don't feel strongly that MOP needs to be maintained at Lower Granite through the end of the month. Our feeling was that, given the larger-than-normal numbers of juveniles still arriving at Lower Granite, it would be best to move them through the reservoir as quickly as possible by keeping the project at MOP. Bettin said Bonneville would prefer to have the additional four feet of operational flexibility at Lower Granite, given the fact that the BiOp requirements have now been met. After a few minutes of additional discussion, the Corps and BPA said they will end MOP operations at Lower Granite effective today, with a soft constraint on the lower operating range preferred by the salmon managers.

5. Update on Spring Creek Spill.

Wills said discussions on this issue began last year, with the goal of reprogramming or eliminating Spring Creek's large release group. The ideas were well-received, but the cost bogged things down, Wills said. The group also discussed moving a portion of the Spring Creek production group to a downstream location, he said, perhaps Big Creek. NOAA Fisheries had some concerns about mingling the Spring Creek tules with the naturally-produced stock in that area, however. The bottom line is that the group is still talking, but the probability that reprogramming will be possible is becoming less over time, Wills said. The Bonneville corner collector comes on-line this year, which will

allow us to monitor passage through various routes of passage, he said. How the corner collector will be operated (with or without training spill) is still under discussion, he said, adding that, to keep all options open, USFWS has submitted the necessary water quality waiver requests to allow the spill program to go forward this spring.

Silverberg said further updates on this topic will be presented at future TMT meetings.

6. System Status.

Bettin noted that the report on the 2002 chum spawning is now available; the bottom line is that about 20,000 chum spawned below Bonneville last year. We will no doubt discuss that further at the year-end review meeting, Silverberg said.

Dworshak is releasing just over minimum flow, 1.7 Kcfs, said Hlebechuk; the hatchery had been having pump cavitation problems at the lower flow, so we increased flow by 100 cfs. We plan to continue at the higher rate of flow until the pump problem is fixed, she said. Exciter testing at Dworshak over the next month will also cause short periods of higher outflow, she said, noting that Dworshak's current elevation is 1517.4. Libby is currently at elevation 2433.5, with outflow increased to 4.6 Kcfs, a single unit, this morning. Albeni Falls is drafting; current elevation is 2059, with 16 Kcfs out. The project will be drafted to elevation 2055-2056 by October 31, at which point we'll decide whether to draft further, she said. John Day is operating within a 2.5-foot operating range currently. There are several line outages scheduled at Lower Granite later this month, which will mean minimum outflow from that project for one day several times this month, she added.

Grand Coulee is at elevation 1288, currently, said Tony Norris; Hungry Horse continues to draft to meet the Columbia Falls minimum and is currently at elevation 3534.

Bettin said there are no power system problems to report. In response to a question, Wagner said a total of 591,000 adult fall chinook have passed Bonneville Dam to date.

7. WMP Status.

Scott Boyd said he hopes to have a final draft of the 2004 Water Management Plan in time for presentation at the October 22 TMT meeting. There will likely be a lot of changes in the fall/winter update, he said.

8. Year-End Review Topics.

You will recall that, at the last TMT meeting, I asked folks to think about any additional topics they would like to address at the next year-end review meeting, Silverberg said. She went through the list of topics developed at the last meeting, offering the group an opportunity to confirm their interest (or lack thereof) in each topic.

Silverberg said she will provide an update list of post-season review topics at the next TMT meeting.

9. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, October 22. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.