

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEETING NOTES
October 22, 2003
CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON**

1. Greeting and Introductions

The October 22 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. Lake Pend Oreille Update.

David Wills said he had not been able to participate in the Idaho Lakes Commission meeting earlier this week. Silverberg noted that the Lakes Commission had provided a letter to TMT following that meeting. Ford Elsaesser said the commission's position, with respect to this year's drawdown of Lake Pend Oreille, is that the kokanee experiment was scheduled for three years of draw-up, which has never been provided. That resulted in litigation, which resulted in two years of compromise at elevation 2053, which basically pleased no one, Elsaesser said. Since the 2000 BiOp went into effect, we've had one year of draw-up at Lake Pend Oreille, and the plan for this year is to draw down to elevation 2051 because of the low year-class of spawners.

The commission's view is that the experiment called for three years, said Elsaesser. The independent scientific reviews have supported the experiment and its favorable effects on kokanee when it was allowed to go forward. The unanimous vote of the commission is that the experiment should continue, Elsaesser said. If the action agencies are determined to draw Lake Pend Oreille down this year, the commission's position is that this year's operation should be followed by a three-year draw-up, to allow the full recovery of Lake Pend Oreille kokanee. The commission further believes that the lake should be drawn up to elevation 2055 or 2056 no later than March 15, said Elsaesser. Further, the lake should be refilled to its summer elevation at the earliest possible date in the spring consistent with prudent flood control management, rather than June 30.

Our greatest concern is that the kokanee experiment be maintained with some degree of integrity, Elsaesser said – so far, it has never been allowed to take place. There is nothing in the documentation on this lake that shows a default position of 2051; that has had a disastrous impact on the fishery in the lake in years past, he said. We need to give the science a chance to work, he said; we strongly urge that the kokanee experiment be allowed to continue. Elsaesser said he will provide a written version of the commission's position to Hlebechuk later today.

Russ Kiefer said going to elevation 2051 this year will not compromise the current Lake

Pend Oreille study design; it calls for being at elevation 2051 during the winter in one out of four years. At the last meeting, you were going to provide some background on the commission members – can you still provide that? Scott Bettin asked. Elsaesser said he will provide this information, noting that the commission was created by statute to be the action agency for the Priest Lake and Lake Pend Oreille basins for water quality and quantity. There are five members, he said, all residents of Bonner County, plus Susan Martin of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the attorney general of Idaho, who has appointed a deputy to participate.

Are the economic impacts of the operation considered? Bettin asked. Our charge is quite broad, Elsaesser replied; economics are considered, but they are focused on the interests of the people of the state of Idaho. What you're proposing is a \$50 million expense to the region, if we draw up three years in a row and fill by March, Bettin said. Elsaesser replied that the Lake Pend Oreille PUD has never been able to demonstrate a \$10 million-per-year economic impact from draw-up. I would like to see any hard evidence you may have that Albeni Falls draw-up costs the region anywhere near \$10 million, he said, particularly if it doesn't have the partisan aspect of the information provided by Pend Oreille PUD. Bonneville will provide that, said Bettin. We will put it on our next Lakes Commission agenda, Elsaesser replied.

Bob Hallcok said the Fish and Wildlife Service addressed this question in its 2000 BiOp; we were looking for completion of a 10-year study, he said, because kokanee are the forage base for the threatened bull trout. That study period concludes in 2006, he said. We now have full outside review of the experimental design, said Hallock; we also asked the reviewers to respond to the question of the recommended frequency of draw-up vs. draw-down. Last year, the lake was up. The year before, it was down. There is also a density-dependent relationship, he said -- if the kokanee are in bad enough shape, it's difficult to show a benefit from this operation. The bottom line is that the Service does not have a dog in this fight, said Hallock; we have agreed to provide a letter to supplement the information in the SOR, but because of new information, we're in a changed condition that supercedes the review.

What does "we don't have a dog in this fight" mean? Hlebechuk asked. We can't show a benefit or a detriment to draw-up vs. draw-down in 2003, Hallock replied – we do, however, feel that it's crucial to provide a draw-up condition in 2004. We realize that chum may be impacted if the lake is not drawn down this year, Hallock added, but chum are not a part of the Fish and Wildlife Service BiOp.

Where does that leave the other TMT members, with respect to the Fish and Wildlife Service SOR? Silverberg asked. We have not retracted the SOR, Wills replied; I haven't heard anything today that would indicate that it should be changed – the lower lake level would benefit chum in 2003, and would not negatively impact kokanee in Lake Pend Oreille. The Lakes Commission would like to guarantee a high lake level in 2005, 2006 and 2007, Wills said, and that's an issue we need to continue to discuss.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the biological impact of the lake levels provided during the previous of this study; it was noted that survival has increased significantly since the experiment began, but the highest survivals were seen in years when the lake level was highest.

Silverberg asked the other TMT members to state their positions on the Fish and Wildlife Service SOR. Ron Boyce said that, while he is unfamiliar with all of the Lake Pend Oreille kokanee data from the previous years of the experiment, ODFW supports operations that enhance chum spawning and rearing conditions. He stated, however, that ODFW would prefer to avoid discussions that trade off benefits for one species vs. another. He said ODFW will defer to the Fish and Wildlife Service with respect to the science underlying this SOR.

IDFG supports the SOR as written, said Kiefer. Bill Hevlin said NOAA Fisheries supports the SOR as written. CRITFC supports the SOR as written, said Kyle Martin. From an economic standpoint, Bonneville supports drawdown to elevation 2051, said Bettin; however, we defer to the Corps in terms of the final decision on this operation. Tony Norris said Reclamation, too, will defer to the Corps. The Corps would like to wait to receive the additional information that has been requested from the Commission and from the Fish and Wildlife Service before we make the final determination, said Hlebechuk. The 2004-2005 operation will be discussed next year, she said, the same is true of the request to refill Lake Pend Oreille by mid-March – that’s not guaranteed either. Hlebechuk said she will distribute the Corps’ decision to the TMT membership via email once the determination is made.

Would the water from Lake Pend Oreille be held at Grand Coulee for use later on chum? Elsaesser asked. During March, holding Albeni Falls four feet higher would result in drafting Grand Coulee four feet lower, Bettin replied. What I’m saying is that the 30+ years of drawdown we’ve seen in recent decades hasn’t directly benefitted chum, Elsaesser said. Paul Wagner has indicated that he will provide some information on that question, Silverberg said. Hevlin noted that the connection between flows and the chum population can be found on page 9-6 of the 2000 BiOp. Bettin noted that the March 15 requirement is a new twist.

A Corps representative asked that the Fish and Wildlife Service and IDFG provide further information about what the Lake Pend Oreille kokanee study calls for next year, because, in her opinion, that is unclear. Elsaesser replied that the Fish and Wildlife Service request for 2004 is clear – it calls for a draw-up. Still, we would like to have the documentation underlying that request, the Corps representative said – that is the operational request, but we need the additional documentation to be provided. We will provide that, said Hallock. In the meantime, said Silverberg, the Corps will issue its decision before the end of the month.

3. Process Chart.

Silverberg said the draft process chart is available via hotlink from today’s agenda on the TMT homepage. In response to a question, Boyce said this chart was developed in an attempt to answer the question of how changes should be made to the operations called for in the 2000 BiOp. You will recall that the salmon managers developed a chart and the action agencies requested some additional time to discuss it, Silverberg said. Hlebechuk said that, in the Action Agencies’ view, this chart simplifies the decision-making hierarchy. The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the process chart, offering a variety of clarifying questions and comments. Ultimately, it was agreed that the TMT membership will continue to review the process chart and will bring any comments they may have to the TMT’s 2003 seasonal review

meeting on November 5.

4. Fall Treaty Fishery Compliance.

Martin noted that the best year for compliance with the one-foot pool elevation standard requested by CRITFC was 2002 for Bonneville pool and 2003 for The Dalles pool. Fishing conditions for the tribal fishers was excellent in 2003, particularly during the last two weeks of September, when it was 100%. Martin also noted that the Fishing season in October had good compliance on the part of the Corps at the John Day reservoir. Hlebechuk said this was because CRITFC specifically requested a priority at John Day rather than Bonneville during these last two weeks. Martin agreed this was the priority for those seasons. The chairman of the CRITFC tribal commission expressed his thanks to the action agencies for their efforts in this regard, Martin said.

5. Hamilton Creek Gauge Response.

Wills reminded the group that, during its recent presentation to the TMT, USGS representatives informed the group that a Hamilton Creek gauge rating curve was impractical; in the absence of a curve, he said, we discussed the possibility of a web cam to show when adequate water was present in Hamilton Creek to allow spawning access. None of the options we discussed at FPAC seemed to be a practical way to meet our real-time management needs, said Wills; I think we're back to relying on the modeling work we've done in past years, and managing to a tailwater elevation that is dictated by flow at Bonneville Dam.

After a brief discussion, Wills said that, in his opinion, the jury is still out as to whether the Hamilton Creek gauge can be used, rather than Bonneville tailwater elevation, as a management tool for the 2003 chum operation. It was agreed to discuss this issue further at a future TMT meeting.

6. Chum Report.

Boyce said FPAC had discussed the chum information requested at its last meeting, but was somewhat unclear about what TMT needs to know. He said that, during yesterday's Ives Island field survey, no chum were seen; they will not show up in any numbers until early November. A few coho and chinook were seen, together with two redds. He said a chum SOR will be submitted within a few days, but at this point, field personnel have seen only a few bright chinook and coho.

The most reliable information on chum is from Ives Island itself, he said; it shows that the chum arrive in numbers during the first week in November. Some years we provide a Bonneville tailwater of 11.5 feet during that first week, and other years we don't, he said; there is some information that indicates that not providing that minimum tailwater elevation early in the season has a negative impact on eventual survival rates. We need to be cognizant of the potential impacts of the Bonneville tailwater elevation on later survival, he said – if we don't provide 11.5 feet early enough, we could be missing an important window of opportunity to enhance spawning conditions. Bettin noted that the Ives Island site is just one of 38 lower river chum

spawning sites identified in 2002.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the spawning location question. Ultimately, it was agreed that a further chum update will be provided at the next TMT meeting.

7. Spring Creek Spill Update.

Wills said the larger group discussion on Spring Creek spill in 2004 has not yet taken place. The question is still up in the air, he said; my personal opinion is that reprogramming will not be possible in 2004. The proposal, in that case, will likely be that the March release will go forward as usual in conjunction with an evaluation, Wills said. We appreciate the fact that we're talking about this sooner, rather than later, he added.

8. 2004 Water Management Plan Update.

Scott Boyd said the most recent version of the 2004 WMP is available on the TMT website. While this is considered the "final" WMP, there are still a number of questions, such as RSW operations, that need to be resolved. He reminded the group that there are still two updates to come on this document, the fall/winter and spring/summer updates, in which operations will be fleshed out further as more information and direction are received. Next up is the fall/winter update, said Boyd; he asked that any operational suggestions be sent to him as soon as possible.

9. System Status.

Hlebechuk said Libby is currently at elevation 2433.3, and is releasing 4.3 Kcfs. Albeni Falls is at elevation 2056.8 and drafting, releasing 10 Kcfs-13 Kcfs. Dworshak is at elevation 1516 feet, with outflow of 1600 cfs. Day-average flow at Bonneville Dam has been between 80 Kcfs and 116 Kcfs over the past week. A Lower Monumental line outage is scheduled for Nov. 17-28, so the project will be spilling everything above 5 Kcfs, with total flow of 15-20 Kcfs expected. Tony Norris said Grand Coulee is at elevation 1289, currently; Hungry Horse is still drafting to meet the Columbia Falls minimum.

Jim Adams noted that there is some missing water quality data from a number of sites over the past two weeks; the Corps is investigating why that is occurring. The problem is not limited to Corps sites, he said; we're tracing back up the line to try to find out what might be causing the problem.

10. Year-End Review Topics.

Silverberg said the facilitation team has developed an agenda for the TMT's year-end review meeting, based on the input received at the last two TMT meetings. She asked that anyone who plans to attend let her know as soon as possible. She went briefly through the agenda for the meeting to see who plans to present each agenda topic.

11. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, November 5. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.

**TMT Participant List
October 22, 2003**

Name	Affiliation
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Bob Hallock	USFWS
Scott Bettin	BPA
Jim Adams	COE
Scott Boyd	COE
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Ron Boyce	ODFW
David Wills	USFWS
Russ Kiefer	IDFG
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Tony Norris	USBR
Bill Hevlin	NOAA Fisheries
John Wellschlager	BPA
Nic Lane	BPA
David Benner	FPC
Tim Heizenrater	PPL
Shane Scott	PPC
Russ George	WMCI
Kyle Martin	CRITFC
Laura Hamilton	COE
Ford Elsaesser	Idaho Lakes Commission
Mitch Hill	ILC
Jeff Loughley	USFWS
Tom Le	PSE
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