

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEETING NOTES
December 3, 2003
CHARBURGER RESTAURANT
CASCADE LOCKS, OREGON
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.

Chum Update:

The TMT spent the morning on a field trip observing chum spawning grounds at Ives Island, Hamilton Creek, Duncan Creek and Hardy Springs. Updates on chum numbers were circulated. Dave Wills, USFWS, reported that 12/2 and 12/5 chum observations will be shared with the TMT at the next TMT meeting.

Spring Creek Update:

Dave Wills, USFWS, reported that BPA, the COE, and USFWS are continuing discussions about Spring Creek operations for March 2004. A TDG waiver consideration has been addressed through the Oregon public hearing process and is scheduled to be discussed at an Oregon DEQ meeting in February. It is yet unknown whether USFWS will need an exemption from the state of Washington relative to the Spring Creek operation. The agency is working to obtain these waivers to keep open the option of spill to support the hatchery release.

2004 Water Management Plan Fall/Winter Update:

Rudd Turner, COE, distributed a draft WMP fall/winter update for review and follow-up discussion at the 12/17 TMT meeting. The update describes current conditions, chum spawning, burbot, flood control operations, Spring Creek, Vernita Bar, and zero flow operations on the Snake River. One suggestion was made today to tighten up language relative to screens at the Bonneville powerhouse 2, discussed in the Spring Creek hatchery section of the update.

ACTION: TMT members will review the Fall/Winter update and come prepared to make comments at the December 17th TMT meeting. TMT will consider whether the 1% excursions operation should be included in the update. The Action Agencies will check the WMP to see if this issue is included there.

Operations Update:

Cathy Hlebechuk, COE, and Tony Norris, BOR, updated the group on system operations. Libby is being operated to meet elevation 2411' by the end of December. A request for burbot operations should be forthcoming in the next week or so. Dworshak is operating at minimum flows. The Bonneville tailwater is being operated at 11.4-11.7' elevation for chum. Grand Coulee is at elevation 1286.4' and Hungry Horse is at 3529.8'.

Zero Flows at Snake River:

Per discussions during a TMT conference call on Monday 12/1, FPAC reviewed some available data relative to effects of zero flow on Snake River migrating adults and juveniles, and redds. The salmon managers are looking for winter counting data for adult passage at Lower Granite. They are concerned that the numbers are beyond the “few, if any” criteria for adults and juveniles. The salmon managers, through consensus, recommended no zero flow during daytime hours. They also expressed, at FPAC, concern with starting zero flow at night until additional issues can be resolved. Dave Wills, USFWS, reported that the Nez Perce tribe was uncomfortable with moving to zero flow and would like to wait two to three weeks to allow for more adults to pass through the projects.

Chris Ross, NOAA, reported that winter 2001-02 ~~juvenile adult~~ counts from the Walla Walla COE are available, and that counts for winter '03 are expected soon for Lower Monumental and Little Goose. Chris offered that available data shows no detrimental effects of zero flow on redds through January. He also said that salmon managers will need to study and address oxygen needs for ~~alevins smolts in -emerging from-~~redds with no flow in February and March. NOAA's ~~Research~~ suggests that a six hour nighttime zero flow is not detrimental to migrating fish and ~~they~~ therefore NOAA Fisheries is ~~are~~ not opposed to the operation.
Editor's note: above paragraph edits from Chris Ross, NOAA Fisheries.

The USFWS would like a bit more time to review the data before agreeing to any zero flow operation.

The COE would like to strike a balance between operations for fish and BPA's need for flexibility. Are the fish “actively migrating” or just moving? This question could not yet be answered during today's discussion.

ACTION: Members of the TMT that were present at today's meeting did not object to the following operation: Flexibility of zero flow for a six hour maximum time period during the hours of 10 pm to 6 am, beginning on Thursday evening, 12/4. Delaying the operation by one day allowed for any TMT member to elevate the issue to IT if so desired. The salmon managers identified a need to review all current data relative to this operation. TMT will review the agreement referenced in the water control manual to see if it is still appropriate, given the current data and system knowledge that the region has gained after 16 years since the document was drafted.. This issue will be revisited at the next TMT meeting.

The facilitation team helped the group draft, and will distribute to all TMT members, an issue statement in the event that someone wishes to elevate to IT. (see attached)

Next Meeting, December 17th, 9-noon:

Agenda Items:

- Chum Update
- Spring Creek Update
- WMP Fall/Winter Review
- Operations Update

1. Greeting and Introductions

The December 3 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 Henriksen at 503/808-3945.

2. Chum Update.

David Wills said the most recent chum survey was conducted yesterday, but he has not yet seen the numbers for Hamilton Creek. Overall, he said, 2003 chum numbers at Ives Island are tracking well below the 2002 numbers, although they're still running well ahead of the 10-year average. Overall, however, we did expect to see a lot more chum in the Ives Island area than we've seen to date in 2003, Wills said. It appears that fall chinook spawning may be somewhat later than normal this year, observed Rudd Turner – it could be that something similar is going on with chum, for whatever reason.

3. Spring Creek Update.

Wills said discussions between the Corps, BPA and the Fish and Wildlife Service are ongoing regarding how the Bonneville corner collector will be operated following the release of the Spring Creek Hatchery fish in March 2004. We'll report back as more information becomes available, said Wills; all we can say at the moment, however, is that discussions are continuing. In response to a question, Wills said the Fish and Wildlife Service did submit its usual water quality waiver request to Oregon DEQ this September; this request would cover a 10-day period of spill following the Spring Creek Hatchery release, and is being processed through the usual channels. The Service is also seeking a Washington DOE water quality exemption to cover Spring Creek Hatchery spill in 2004, although it is unclear whether or not such an exemption will be needed.

4. WMP Fall/Winter Update.

Rudd Turner distributed copies of the draft fall/winter update to the 2004 Water Management Plan; he asked the other TMT members to review this document and provide any comments they may have at the December 17 TMT meeting. Turner went briefly through the contents of the draft update, noting some of the areas of similarity and dissimilarity between the 2003 and 2004 fall/winter updates. Turner noted that the Vernita Bar minimum flow for this winter has been set at 70 Kcfs. Scott Bettin asked the group to think about whether or not the excursion from 1% operation referenced in the fish passage plan should also be addressed in the fall/winter update.

5. Operations Update.

Hlebechuk said the final burbot SOR will be submitted soon; a draft has been submitted

and the burbot operation has already begun. Libby is currently releasing 20 Kcfs and will do so until about December 18, at which point Libby outflow will be reduced to about 10 Kcfs. Libby's December 31 target elevation is 2411 feet. Libby will try to maintain as stable a flow as possible through the month of January, if flood control elevations allow. The draft SOR requested outflows from mid December through the end of January be as stable as possible. We're still in negotiations on the specifics of the burbot operation, Hlebechuk said; again, the final SOR should be submitted later this week.

Dworshak continues to release minimum outflow, Hlebechuk said; we have also changed the Bonneville tailwater range for chum to 11.4-11.7 feet. Tony Norris added that Grand Coulee is currently at elevation 1286.4 feet; Hungry Horse is at 3529.8 feet.

6. Snake River Zero Flow Operations.

Wills noted that, at the conclusion of Monday's TMT conference call, he had agreed to gather some data regarding the fish passage situation in the Snake River during the month of December. We were trying to get the winter video counting data from a couple of the Snake River projects, he said; the concern among most FPAC members was that the number of adult steelhead currently passing Lower Granite is much higher than normal. We were looking for any historic data that might shed some insight into whether or not the 2003 counts are truly higher than normal, he said, and were able to obtain some November-February counts from Little Goose and Lower Monumental, which were done in response to the bull trout SOR.

There are varying degrees of concern among the FPAC membership about whether zero flow at night is a concern, he said; FPAC was unanimous in its concern about zero flow during the day, said Wills. There were also some concerns raised about the impacts of zero flow in the Snake on any juvenile migrants that are still present in the system, he said; however, there really isn't any data available to answer that question. Another concern was the effects of zero flow on fall chinook redds established below the Snake River projects, said Wills; Chris Ross was able to assemble some information on that issue.

As far as what FPAC decided, yesterday's meeting ended with some questions still outstanding, Wills said; for that reason, FPAC was in agreement not to begin the zero flow operation at this time, until some of these outstanding questions can be answered. He noted that the Nez Perce Tribe and Oregon, in particular, would prefer to wait at least two weeks to begin the zero nighttime flow operation, until adult steelhead numbers fall below a couple of dozen per day at Lower Granite.

Ross said the Corps' Walla Walla District had provided video fish-counting information from Little Goose and Lower Monumental from 2001 and 2002; this information comes from video counts conducted during the months of November, December, January and February at those two projects. Ross noted that, in 2002, fish did not start moving past these two projects to spawn until early March.

The other issue that was brought up at yesterday's FPAC call was the effects of zero flow on redds deposited below the Snake River projects, said Ross; I found one paper that said that

short periods of zero flow over the eggs is not detrimental. He added that he had discussed this issue with Russ Kiefer, who had spoken to Idaho hatchery personnel; they indicated much the same thing, said Ross. The other question is the potential impacts of periods of zero flow on the fry once they emerge from the eggs, said Ross.

In response to a question, Bettin said the zero flow period would be confined to the hours of 10 a.m.-6 p.m. He noted that the redds below the Snake River projects would not be dewatered under the zero nighttime flow operation; they are too deep, and the tailwater elevations would fluctuate by only a few tenths of a foot.

The bottom line, however, is that the Nez Perce Tribe, Oregon and Idaho are all opposed to the action agencies' implementing a zero nighttime flow operation at the Snake River projects at this time, said Wills. And is that opposition strong enough that the salmon managers would want to elevate this issue to the IT? Silverberg asked. We didn't discuss that directly, Wills replied. Ross noted that the Corps' criteria – "a few fish" – are clearly not being met currently, with more than 100 adults still passing Lower Granite daily.

Turner noted that the Corps has been unable to find a formal written agreement between the Corps and the fishery agencies on this issue. The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to this issue, notably, about what constitutes "a few" adult migrants at Lower Granite, and who would elevate this issue to the IT, if necessary. Wills noted that, while the salmon managers recognize that the winter zero flow operation is rooted in history, it may not be rooted well. This isn't a new operation, he said, but there is an inclination, on the part of some of the salmon managers, to rethink it somewhat more deeply this year. Wills noted that NOAA Fisheries is not one of those parties; at this point, NOAA is comfortable with allowing the zero nighttime flow operation to proceed. Bettin noted that the Nez Perce are not actually a part of the Regional Forum process therefore, it would be up to Oregon or Idaho to elevate this issue. Hlebechuk added that, in her opinion, this may not be a TMT issue, because it is not a BiOp issue.

Richelle Beck asked what has changed this year, given the fact that the zero flow operation has been implemented at the Lower Snake projects every year since 1987. One participant noted that BPA's request to implement a 24-hour zero flow operation, rather than zero flow only during nighttime hours, was the catalyst. There is also some new information about the upstream movement of adult chinook during the winter that people would like to consider, Ross observed.

Turner said that, from the Corps' perspective, the desired outcome is an operation that meets the needs of fish and provides adequate operational flexibility during the highest-demand period of the year. The discussion we've had since Monday has been extremely good, he said; this is clearly a topic that deserves further consideration. However, it is not clear to us that some limited flexibility to go to a zero-flow operation at the Lower Snake projects during nighttime hours – 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. – would be detrimental to adult migrants in the Snake at this point in the season, Turner said. We will make that operational flexibility available beginning tomorrow night at 10 p.m., said Turner; if someone wants to elevate it, there will be an opportunity to discuss this issue at tomorrow's IT meeting.

Wills reiterated the salmon managers' position, developed at yesterday's FPAC meeting – essentially, that all of the salmon managers were uncomfortable with the concept of daytime zero flow. Various parties also expressed varying degrees of concern about going to a zero nighttime flow operation at the Lower Snake projects at this point, he said, to the extent that it is fair to say that the salmon managers would not recommend implementing this operation at this time. I think it is likely that someone will elevate this issue at tomorrow's IT meeting, Wills said. Ross noted that the effects of this operation on the health of the river may also be a concern. In response to a request, Bettin said BPA is willing to try to limit the zero flow operation to any six hours within the eight-hour window, but said he cannot guarantee that it will be possible to do so.

Ultimately, it was agreed to attempt to frame this issue for tomorrow's IT meeting, although it was still unclear whether or not it will be formally elevated. The issue was framed as follows:

Given current fish conditions and power marketing opportunities, should zero flow operational flexibility be implemented at the four Lower Snake projects now, or at some time in the future?

Silverberg said she will contact Ron Boyce later this afternoon to see whether or not Oregon want to elevate this issue to the IT.

7. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, December 17. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.

TMT ATTENDANCE LIST

December 3, 2003

Name	Affiliation
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Richelle Beck	D. Rohr & Associates
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Chris Ross	NOAA Fisheries
David Benner	FPC
Scott Bettin	BPA
David Wills	USFWS
Russ George	WMCI
Rudd Turner	COE

Ben Zolinski	BPA
John Wellschlager	BPA
Jim Adams	COE
Nic Lane	BPA
Tony Norris	USBR