

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
CONFERENCE CALL NOTES
January 7, 2004**

1. Greeting and Introductions

The January 7 Technical Management Team meeting became a conference call when severe winter weather closed many offices in the Portland area. The call was chaired by Cindy Henriksen of the Corps. 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. Early Bird Water Supply Forecast.

The January early-bird forecast developed by the Northwest River Forecast Center broke down as follows: Grand Coulee, January-July, 100% of normal; The Dalles January-July, 103 MAF, 96% of normal; Libby, January-July, 6.38 MAF, 101% of normal; Hungry Horse, April-September, 2.12 MAF, 100% of normal; Brownlee 67% of normal; Lower Granite, April-July, 19.4 MAF, 90% of normal. This does not include the most recent snowstorm, however, and includes only 25-50% of all of the stations reporting. The January final forecast will be available on January 9. [Editor's note: The Corps and Reclamation prepare the official forecasts for Libby, Dworshak and Hungry Horse. The official forecasts from the Corps, Reclamation, or RFC were not complete at the time of the call].

What about Dworshak? Paul Wagner asked. The Corps' forecast is 2.6 MAF, 99% of normal, Henriksen replied. I was surprised to see that Dworshak is releasing 8 Kcfs, currently, said Ron Boyce. We have the operational flexibility to do that, Henriksen replied – we increased flow to meet power demand with the cold weather. Today is the last day we'll be doing that; by tomorrow, we'll be back to minimum outflow. Assuming that inflows continue at the current level, we felt we still have a good chance to meet the March 31 flood control point of 1521 at that project – we're at 1516 feet, currently, Henriksen said.

What is the anticipated outflow at Dworshak after March 31? Dave Statler asked. Good question – I don't know the answer, Henriksen replied. But are you assuming minimum outflow from Dworshak through the end of June in order to refill? It's too soon to say, Henriksen said. It is very unlikely that we will be on minimum outflow at Dworshak for that entire period, Scott Bettin replied. Having Dworshak on minimum outflow would be very undesirable, said Statler; my concern is that any operations like we've seen over the past few days could take water away from the spring migrants. We would prefer to see you be a bit more aggressive in your current refill schedule, he said. Our first milestone is really the April 10 refill target, said Henriksen – it's actually a bit lower than 1521 feet. Based on the information we have now, the Corps is confident that the increased outflow over the past several days will not significantly impact our ability to meet the March 31 flood control elevation.

When will the decision about a Dworshak/Grand Coulee flood control shift be made?

Statler asked. Typically in March, Henriksen replied. Russ Kiefer noted that the current Dworshak operation has caused some concerns for local fishermen; he asked that, in the future, such planned operations be posted to the Lewiston Tribune. I understand the need for the operation, he said, but making more of an effort to get that information out would be helpful.

Bettin noted that there is a chance that the current Dworshak operation could continue a little longer, given continued cold temperatures throughout the region. So there is some question about whether we will go to minimum outflow at Dworshak tomorrow? Boyce asked. I'm just saying that isn't off the table, Bettin said. Henriksen said that at the time of this discussion there were no plans to maintain flow greater than minimum from Dworshak beyond today.

3. Chum Update.

We have completed the final 2003 chum spawning survey, said Boyce; December 12 was the last survey date. For chum, the total 2003 lives were 1,381, much lower than last year's total of 6,600+ – that's 21% of the 2002 live count. That really dropped off, Boyce said. For chinook, the cumulative was 1,677, about 80% of the 2002 count at Ives Island. It appears that that wasn't the case in the tributaries, he said, and we don't have an explanation why it occurred. Did you mainly see four-year-old fish this year? Bettin asked. That appeared to be the case, Boyce replied. Bettin observed that the 2003 four-year-olds would have resulted from the 1999 spawning, which saw limited use of the Ives Island spawning grounds, so this isn't unexpected.

We're currently in an 11.8-12.1-foot Bonneville operating range, said Boyce – will that be the incubation flow? Unless something changes radically in the forecast, Bettin replied.

4. Other Snake River Issues.

A. Spring Spill Trigger and Dworshak Operations Into September. Bettin said he was wondering what the reaction from the salmon managers would be if 80 Kcfs was used as the spill trigger in the Snake River this spring. It seems to me it would make more sense to set the spill trigger based on a range of factors, rather than a total flow threshold, Boyce replied. If you look at the literal interpretation of the BiOp, we shouldn't have spilled in 2003, because we never quite achieved the 80 Kcfs flow level in the Snake, said Bettin. If you look at the survival data, however, it's better to have fish in-river under those flow conditions, said Boyce. I'm just going into the lessons learned context to see if we couldn't refine the spill operation, said Bettin – if the forecast for the week says we're not going to hit 80 Kcfs, our proposal would be no spill. There are other factors involved, said Boyce. Perhaps we could ask FPAC to discuss that proposal and develop some pros and cons to the proposal, said Bettin. We can do that, said Paul Wagner.

The other issue was whether it would be possible to firm up our draft to 1520 at Dworshak into mid-September, said Bettin – we've spent a lot of time on that issue at TMT and the IT over the past two years, and given the fact that the operation has worked well both years, perhaps we could try to come to some agreement ahead of time this year. We can discuss that, Boyce replied, but bear in mind that for the past two years we've had favorable water temperature conditions. If the river is hotter this year, then there will be conflicts. Dave Statler said it would be difficult, at this point, to get to a firm agreement on that specific operation.

Kiefer agreed, noting that, while the operation has worked well over the past two years, it might make more sense to seek an intermediate agreement, saying that, while that is the most likely operation, actual operations will depend on actual conditions in the river.

Part of my reason for asking is that maintaining that flexibility does cost the hydrosystem some money, so if we could firm it up ahead of time, that would be helpful, said Bettin. We'll definitely explore that question, said Kiefer. We appreciate your willingness to look into that, said Bettin.

B. Zero Flow in the Snake River. We agreed to look at this question and did so yesterday, said Boyce; we talked about the count criteria and were unable to come to resolution. One thing we do need is real-time adult counts in the Snake, said Boyce; if there is a funding issue, we need to explore that. Perhaps that's a funding issue for SCT, Henriksen suggested. That would probably be too late, said Boyce – I think it would be more productive for the Corps and BPA to discuss it directly. Some time early in February, fish will start migrating again, and we need that information. So you're talking about 2004 counts? Henriksen asked. Yes, Boyce replied. Obviously when the ladders are shut down, there would not be a need for counting, said Kiefer. As soon as the ladders start up again, video data indicates that several hundred fish per day passing.

What we're requesting is that whenever the ladders are operating, we have count data, said Boyce. I would agree with Cindy that SCT would be the most appropriate forum to handle that request, said Bettin – this is not a new issue, it's something we've been doing forever. What about the feasibility of asking Bonneville to fund it this year? Boyce asked. I would say it's about zero, Bettin replied. I think SCT would need to reprioritize its FY'04 program, even so, said Henriksen. Perhaps we can at least explore what it would take to get that done in 2004, said Boyce. OK, Henriksen replied – I'll try to have that for you by the January 21 TMT meeting.

The bottom line is that, by next month, when the steelhead resume their migration, the zero flow operation could begin to have a biological impact, said Boyce.

C. Update on Salmon Managers' Review of Fishery Data. This topic was not discussed at today's meeting.

D. Little Goose Outage. We have to do a line switch at Little Goose, so we're planning to go to zero flow for 5-6 hours at that project, Bettin said – I think it's January 22. No TMT objections were raised to this operation.

5. Spring Creek Update.

In the absence of a Fish and Wildlife Service representative, no Spring Creek update was presented at today's meeting.

6. 2004 Water Management Plan Fall/Winter Update.

Henriksen said there is little new to report on this issue; the revised draft of the draft plan

and fall/winter update should be available via the TMT homepage by the end of this week. The most recent draft includes updated information such as the current chum operation at Bonneville. We have had no comments on the plan and assume it is near final. I have not had an opportunity to review the plan, said Boyce. We can revisit this topic at the January 21 meeting, Henriksen said, and we can finalize it then.

7. Operations Update.

The current elevation at Grand Coulee is 1280 feet; Hungry Horse is at 3524 and meeting Columbia Falls minimum flow, which will likely go up as soon as we get the January final forecast, said Tony Norris – probably 3.5 Kcfs. Again, the Corps' expectation is that we will be reducing Dworshak outflow to minimum later today, said Henriksen.

We increased Libby outflow from 10 Kcfs to 12 Kcfs on Monday, to meet the January 31 flood control point at that project, Henriksen said – that's a few days sooner than expected.

8. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, January 21. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.