

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

January 21st, 2004

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.

Introductions: TMT members welcomed Cindy LeFleur, the new TMT representative for WDFW, to the team. Members introduced themselves and provided some background about their individual roles in the Regional Forum. Cindy brings expertise on harvest management issues – the team agreed that Cindy's knowledge on this will add greatly to the technical discussions. Welcome to the TMT Cindy!

Chum Update:

Ron Boyce, Oregon, reported that all chum counts were up in 2003 compared to 2002, except for Ives Island. Biologists looked at stream flows and tailwater, which showed that in late March to early April, low flows and out-migration may have caused dewatering. It could also be low 2001 fish numbers. Oregon continues to look at the data to try to determine why chum numbers were down in the Ives Island area. The annual report is being developed; data will be provided to the TMT as it is analyzed. Oregon is leaning toward an analysis that low spring flows may contribute to low returns at Ives Island.

Spill at Bonneville:

Scott Bettin, BPA, reported that the Bonneville project has been spilling 1.8 kcfs per day for adult fish attraction since December 1st. FPOM discussed this operation and found that an average 4-7 fish are passing the dam per day for the January/February time period. BPA requested a no spill operation at this project, effective immediately. Chris Ross reported that NOAA coordinated internally since the TMT representatives have never dealt with this issue before. NOAA feels that because it is wintertime and there is low passage, there might be a short term benefit to stopping spill now. NOAA would like to work with FPAC to continue discussions on this, review the data and monitor the fish at the project.

Oregon felt that this issue was not appropriate for TMT members to discuss, considering the group has not dealt with this in the past. Ron reported that the Oregon FPOM representative holds the position that it is beneficial to the fish to spill at the project. Ron Boyce would like to review the numbers and impacts of no spill before making a decision. Ron suggested that FPOM look at the issue and give a short description to FPAC for review. This process was not acceptable to BPA.

Other members weighed in on the request:

- USFWS: Mostly concerned with when spill will be turned back on. Supports NOAA's recommendation and is hard pressed to support the continuation of spill.
- Idaho: Seems like a reasonable request given the low steelhead numbers. Would like FPAC to discuss:
 - a) criteria/number of fish for turning on BON spill as an adult attraction operation, and
 - b) criteria for ending zero flow in the Snake River.
- COE: Looked at average numbers of passing steelhead from 1995-2002, which showed an average 10 fish or less passing during this timeframe. Based on the low numbers, multi-use of the dam and understanding the salmon managers will discuss this further, the COE is prepared to shut off spill at BON.
- Washington: Doesn't make logical sense to continue spill given the very low numbers of fish passing.
- BOR: Will support the recommendations of NOAA and the COE.
- BPA: What is the change in survival based on stopping spill? The effect is to delay migration by one day.
- Oregon: Requests that in the future if such an issue is brought to the TMT, members are allowed more time to coordinate internally.

ACTION: The COE will stop spill at spillway 1 effective immediately. FPAC will continue to monitor the project and review data, and specifically address the two points suggested by Idaho above. There will be an update on this at the next TMT meeting.

Salmon Managers Discussion:

- *Use of weekly flow level to determine on/off spring spill*: BPA, at the last meeting, suggested an alternate trigger than is in the BiOp for spring spill operations. The salmon managers discussed other options, and are not in favor of a weekly on/off management. The ISAB recommended the use of "all passage routes" in order to "spread the risk" and do not favor one route over the other. Russ Keifer, Idaho, said that the spring spill work group will discuss this and other alternatives. He pointed out that there is no evidence, except during very low flow conditions, that transport (which would be the fallback if spill is turned off) is as beneficial as spill, and may even be harmful. The weekly on/off option seems to move away from protecting fish.
- *Timing of Dworshak draft to elevation 1520'*: The salmon managers prefer a 1520' end of August planning target with flexibility to go to September 15th via adaptive management. Dave Statler said that the Nez Perce are comfortable with 1535' by August 31st, which allows a 200 kaf carryover to September. TMT will continue discussion of this in mid- to late February when beginning the Spring/summer update to the WMP.

Adult Fish Counts in Lower Snake 2004:

Dave Wills, USFWS, reported that the salmon managers are hoping to get Monday and Thursday numeric counts tallied from the video counts being done at Little Goose and Lower Monumental to provide for TMT. The COE noted that unless funded elsewhere, video counting will end at the end of February. A question was raised to the salmon managers: Based on historic data, is there a recommendation for how to proceed? The

salmon managers are working on this question. Other questions were raised: How will the counts help make decisions? What are the biological impacts on fish? Also, if future funding of the video counts is desired, all TMT members should alert their SCT member of the issue.

Spring Creek Update:

No changes have occurred since the last update to TMT. There is an upper policy level meeting scheduled for next week to discuss this issue. Dave Wills will update TMT on those discussions at the next TMT meeting.

Water Management Plan Fall/Winter Update:

The final WMP fall/winter update is now on the web. Oregon will have comments, which will be attached to the web report sometime this week.

Operations Update:

- *Water supply:* The January final water supply forecast is out. The forecast shows near normal water supply at each of the projects (90-98%). The mid-month forecast is slightly lower. The COE has posted the flood control levels on the TMT web page. Because Dworshak is showing a near normal water supply forecast, the shifted flood control is 1530' for the end of March. The COE has some flexibility in the meantime, some of which was used from Jan. 5-7. Idaho requested advisement of level changes for Dworshak prior to making changes should that occur in the future.

- *Other operations:* Tony Norris, BOR, reported that Grand Coulee is at elevation 1272'; Hungry Horse is at 3521.4' and meeting minimums at Albeni Falls. Kyle Martin reported that CRITFC is hosting a flood control workshop in Portland on February 12th. The workshop will involve technical and policy discussions, particularly addressing ways to improve fish passage. Cindy Henriksen, COE, gave the TMT a heads up that Little Goose will be operating at speed/no load for a line switch on Thursday, 1/22. The COE is coordinating on this and working to minimize the number of hours for the special operation.

Next Meeting, February 4th, 9 am:

Agenda items include:

- Summer Spill Review and Discussion (information/technical input)
 - Options
 - Sympass analysis
 - Offsets
 - [NOTE: The COE will send information for this agenda item out to TMT members early next week]
- Spill at Bonneville Update from Salmon Managers
- Adult Fish Counts in Lower Snake – update from salmon managers and COE
- Spring Creek Operations Update from USFWS
- Operations Update

1. Greeting and Introductions

The January 21 Technical Management Team meeting was chaired by Cindy Henriksen 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.

Silverberg welcomed new WDFW representative Cindy LeFleur to today's meeting.

2. Chum Update.

Ron Boyce said he had provided a written summary of the 2003 chum spawning ground survey prior to today's meeting; this information is now available via hotlink from the TMT's Internet homepage. At the last TMT, I reported that we saw a decrease in 2003 chum spawning in the Ives Island area, said Boyce; we then looked at all of the mainstem and tributary data, as well as data from past years. The long and short of it is that chum counts were up in 2003 compared to 2002 numbers for all sites except Ives Island, said Boyce. The total number of live chum counted in 2003 was just over 1,300, compared to more than 6,000 in 2002.

Boyce went through some of the potential factors behind this decline, including reduced incubation flows from Bonneville during March and April 2001, which may have dewatered some chum redds and led to higher-than-normal outmigration mortality in 2001. In any event, we feel that a lower-than-average Age-3 return in 2003 may be attributable to these and other factors, said Boyce; we will run some further analyses and include that information in our annual report.

Do you have a count for the index as a whole? Scott Bettin asked. I don't have the final counts for 2003, Boyce replied; it was 20,000-25,000 in 2002. The bottom line is that we did see a decline in the live spawner counts at Ives Island in 2003, which may be at least partially attributable to the flow regime in the spring of 2001, he said. And you will continue to look at the data to try to reach some conclusions? Silverberg asked. Yes, Boyce replied – in the meantime, I think the lesson may be that we need to be very careful to maintain the Bonneville tailwater elevation during the spring period to avoid adverse impacts to chum. When do you expect the annual report to be available? Henriksen asked. Not until September, Boyce replied, but we will provide summary data as it is developed. In the meantime, again, I am convinced that the low tailwater elevations at Bonneville during the spring of 2001 may have been a factor in the lower 2003 returns to Ives Island. I hope we will keep that in mind this spring, he added.

3. Outcome of Salmon Managers' Discussion of Weekly Flow Level to Determine Spill (On/Off) in Spring.

Scott Bettin said this issue arose out of the TMT's year-end review, and was raised at the last TMT meeting; he noted that, according to a literal interpretation of the

BiOp criteria, there would have been no spring spill at the Lower Snake projects in 2003, because total river flow at Lower Granite never quite reached 85 Kcfs. I suggested, then, that we consider using a weekly spill trigger of 90 Kcfs at Lower Granite in 2004, Bettin said.

David Wills said FPAC had discussed this issue and did not favor a total shutdown of spill throughout the Snake River if total river flow falls below 90 Kcfs. We're not in favor of the weekly on/off plan, he said – for various reasons, we would prefer to continue spill once it begins. The ISAB's recommendation was essentially that we should provide all passage routes, spreading the risk rather than favoring one route of passage over another, said Paul Wagner – the on/off approach would definitely favor transportation over in-river passage. That is what the current BiOp tells us to do, Bettin observed. True, but the data that is emerging shows that the fish that migrate in-river during April, when flows are generally lower, survive better than the fish that are transported or pass through the turbines during that period, said Wagner.

Russ Kiefer said FPAC will be discussing this issue in more detail in the future; however, he said, I agree that we do not have conclusive evidence that transportation provides a survival benefit in the Snake River, except under extremely low-flow conditions. I am reluctant to get into a difficult battle over changing this criteria before the new BiOp is available later this year, Kiefer said – it will be very bloody if we try to reach a resolution on this issue before the BiOp is issued.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, Silverberg noted that the TMT is not expected to make a decision on this issue at today's meeting. It was agreed to revisit this issue at a future TMT meeting.

4. Outcome of Salmon Managers' Discussion of the Timing of the Dworshak Draft to Elevation 1520 in 2004.

Bettin said the intent of this agenda item was to firm up the date by which Dworshak will be drafted to elevation 1520 – August 31 or September 15 - in 2004. Procedurally, we're still saying we would draft to 1520 by August 31, recognizing that it is an in-season decision, David Wills replied - in other words, we would prefer to retain the operational flexibility to draft the project sooner if water temperatures warrant. Dave Statler said the Nez Perce Tribe is comfortable setting a Dworshak draft limit of 1535 by August 31. Bettin noted that retaining that operational flexibility does have some cost. Is this something that will be addressed in the new BiOp? Silverberg asked. Likely, Wagner replied.

We wouldn't necessarily oppose what BPA is proposing, said Kiefer, but at the last FPAC meeting, we discussed a slightly different question. It was agreed that discussions on this issue will continue, and that it will be revisited at a future TMT meeting.

5. Adult Fish Counts in the Lower Snake River in 2004.

Wills said FPAC discussed this issue at its last meeting, but did not finish that discussion. They're doing video counts at Little Goose and Lower Monumental over the winter, but we need more information on the manpower costs involved in reviewing those tapes so that we have real-time passage information in season, Wills said. We will then pass that funding request along to the powers that be, he said.

The Corps has also discussed this issue, said Henriksen; currently, although those counts are going to be reviewed by WDFW, there is no plan to review the tapes until early February. Currently, some of the fishways are out of service at the Lower Snake projects, she added; daily Lower Granite counting will officially begin on March 1. Once the data is available from WDFW, we can discuss it further, she added. Our concern is that, based on historic data, steelhead migration resumes in the Lower Snake some time in February, and the salmon managers would like to have real-time information about winter passage to support real-time decision-making, Wills said. Bettin noted that the February video counting is scheduled to end after 2004, so if the salmon managers would like the program to continue, they should speak to their SCT representative.

The question then becomes, what conclusions would you draw from the previous two years of video counting data? Henriksen asked. Is there a salmon manager recommendation that is being formulated based on that data? We're working on some ideas that we're planning to bring to TMT in the future, Wills replied, but we're not quite ready to present them yet. In response to a question, Kiefer said one of those ideas is to try to develop criteria to better-define "few" in the context of "few fish pass the projects" during this period. The bottom line is impacts on fish, and concerns on the part of the salmon managers about impacts to adult steelhead, Boyce said – we want to be able to obtain that critical real-time information in-season, and will be pursuing funding with the appropriate agencies. We'll discuss this further at the February 4 TMT meeting, said Silverberg.

6. Spring Creek Update.

Wills reported that there have been no major developments in the Spring Creek spill discussions; there will be a meeting next week to discuss spill protocols for the Bonneville corner collector in 2004, and I remain optimistic, he said. And will that meeting be for policy-level personnel? Henriksen asked. Yes, Wills replied.

7. Final Water Management Plan – Fall/Winter Update.

Scott Boyd said the final 2004 Water Management Plan and fall/winter update are now available via a hotlink from the TMT's Internet homepage. We now consider that a final document, said Henriksen, and are moving on to the spring/summer update. Boyce said Oregon still plans to submit comments on the fall/winter update. We will attach them to the document once those are received, said Boyd, although I do not intend to revise the actual document further at this time.

8. Operations Update.

Henriksen said the January final water supply forecast is now available, as well as a mid-month forecast, which is slightly lower than the final. According to the January final WSF, the Grand Coulee January-July forecast is 61 MAF, 98% of normal; the Lower Granite April-July forecast is 19.8 MAF, 92% of normal; The Dalles January-July forecast is 103 MAF, 96% of normal. With that data, the flow objectives would be greater than the minimum numbers at Lower Granite and McNary, and closer to the top of the scale, Henriksen said. According to the mid-month forecast, Grand Coulee is at 97% of normal, the Lower Granite forecast increased slightly, and the forecast at The Dalles decreased slightly. The forecast error at The Dalles is about 27 MAF. The Corps has posted Columbia River flood control elevations for storage projects around the basin on the Corps web page, Henriksen added.

At Dworshak, the January final water supply forecast is normal, which puts the project's shifted flood control elevation at 1530 feet on March 3, said Henriksen. That gives us a little extra operational flexibility at Dworshak, Henriksen said; you will recall that we used some of that flexibility to release some additional water during early January when the region experienced below average cold temperature. The bottom line is that we have 25-30 ksf in additional operational flexibility at Dworshak between now and the end of March, she said. Basically, we wanted to give you a heads-up that we may run some additional water out of Dworshak over the coming weeks, said Bettin. And there will be a Grand Coulee/Dworshak flood control shift this year? Wagner asked. The 2000 BiOp recommends a shift in an average water year such as this, so that was part of the criteria in developing the amount of flexibility available at Dworshak, Henriksen replied.

Tony Norris reported that Grand Coulee is currently at elevation 1272; Hungry Horse is at 3521.4 feet and meeting the 3.5 Kcfs Columbia Falls minimum flow.

Libby is operating at minimum outflow of 4 Kcfs, down from 10 Kcfs at the beginning of January, Henriksen said. The January final water supply forecast was 91% of normal at Libby, said Henriksen; that puts the project's January 31 VARQ elevation at 2422.5 feet. The current elevation is 2405, hence the reduction in outflow from the project, Henriksen said.

Bettin said there are no power issues to report, currently.

9. Attraction Spill at Bonneville.

Bettin said that, currently, Bonneville is spilling 1.8 Kcfs during daytime hours for fish attraction at Bonneville Spillbay 1. That operation is not in the BiOp, so we weren't sure why it was occurring, Bettin said. I took the issue to FPOM; they, too, were unsure why it was occurring, but agreed to look into it. It appears that 4-7 fish are passing Bonneville per day; I asked if we could cut off spill for now, but FPOM said no, that we would need to elevate that issue if we want to stop spill, said Bettin. He noted that a number of adult steelhead – about 100 -- appear to be living in the ladder, but again, only 4-7 fish per day are actually passing the project, total. Is it all right with TMT if we stop the attraction spill at Bonneville for now? Bettin asked.

Chris Ross said Gary Fredricks, NOAA Fisheries' lead biologist for Bonneville, would prefer to continue attraction flow if the fishway is operational, but was unaware of the current passage numbers, and is willing to live with whatever decision TMT makes on this issue. We have not reviewed the historic data, and this is the first time Paul Wagner and I have addressed this issue. Currently, most of the water is going past the second powerhouse, which is where the fish are going to be attracted, Ross said; the Washington-side fishway, which is near Powerhouse 2, is operational. I guess my thinking is that it is wintertime, and with single-digit passage, it may make sense to stop the spill, look at the data, and monitor in-season to see when the fish start moving up to the spawning grounds, probably some time in February, Ross said. The bottom line is that I'm leaning toward accommodating BPA's request, said Ross, while monitoring the situation in the river.

Boyce said that, in his opinion, this issue isn't ripe for TMT decision. Winter steelhead are depressed and very important to the State of Oregon, and I'm not ready to make this decision today before I've had a chance to look at the available data, he said.

Bettin said he has been working this issue through FPOM for the past 52 days, and that he is now elevating it to the TMT. I'm willing to move quickly on this issue, said Boyce, but I would like FPOM to develop a short description of the issue, to which FPAC will provide a response within a specified time-frame. Is that acceptable? Boyce asked. No, Bettin replied – BPA would prefer to stop the spill now, rather than continuing to spill at a cost of \$48,000 per day, while we study the issue. In response to a question from Cindy LeFleur, Bettin said this is a money issue, pure and simple; even this modest amount of spill costs Bonneville nearly \$500,000 over the course of the season. He added, however, that cutting off spill at Spillbay 1 is not a survival issue – it will only delay fish passage by a day or so.

After a few minutes of further discussion, Kiefer said that, given the single-digit passage occurring at Bonneville at this time, he may be in favor of BPA's request, because the Washington-side ladder at B2 is operational now; his concern is what criteria will be used to turn spill back on at the Cascade Island ladder. It was agreed to ask FPOM to look at both this question and when to end zero nighttime flow at the Snake River projects. Wagner reiterated that NOAA Fisheries is not opposed to BPA's request, particularly given the fact that the fishways are currently out of service at The Dalles and John Day Dams. Wills said that, from a Fish and Wildlife Service perspective, he agrees with Kiefer that FPOM should consider the criteria under which attraction spill would resume. With that caveat, he said, the Fish and Wildlife Service will not oppose BPA's request.

What about the Washington? Silverberg asked. LeFleur replied that it doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to continue attraction spill at the Cascade Island ladder at this time, given the information presented at today's meeting. The Corps? Silverberg asked. One item of information we looked at was the historic steelhead passage data dating back to 1995, said Henriksen; on average, from January through late February, the historic steelhead passage index is 10 fish or less until late February or early March. Based on that information, and the need for multi-purpose use of the project, the Corps is prepared

to stop spill at Bonneville Spillbay 1 until we get further criteria, Henriksen said. Reclamation will follow NOAA Fisheries' and the Corps' recommendations, said Norris.

Procedurally, then, unless another TMT member chooses to elevate this issue, the action agencies have the authority to end spill at Bonneville, said Silverberg. Do any TMT members wish to elevate this issue to the IT? Boyce reiterated his opposition to this course of action, but said he does not chose to elevate this issue at this time. He asked that, in the future, BPA provide information about such operational requests in advance of the TMT meeting, rather than simply putting them on the table at the last minute. Understood, said Bettin, but this forum does allow for real-time decisions.

Later in the meeting, Boyce said he had spoken to ODFW's FPOM representative, and it was Oregon's understanding that FPOM would revisit this issue once various informational requests relating to wild winter steelhead passage were answered. We were completely unaware that BPA planned to elevate this issue to TMT, without further discussion at FPOM, Boyce said. We will provide that data, said Bettin, but it will not be significantly different than the 10 fish per day passage number you've already heard. He noted that he had requested a special FPOM meeting to discuss this issue, but that request was not met.

BPA and the Corps, then, will move forward with stopping spill at Spillbay 1, said Silverberg; FPAC, FPOM and NOAA Fisheries will continue to monitor and discuss the situation, as well as the criteria under which spill will resume. Bettin said spill will end at 10:15 this morning. We'll discuss this issue further at the February 4 TMT meeting, Silverberg said.

10. Other.

Kyle Martin said CRITFC will be hosting a flood control workshop on February 12; its purpose will be to explore ways to optimize flood control operations to benefit fish.

There is an operation tomorrow at Little Goose under which the project will go to speed-no-load for five hours to accommodate a line change, Bettin reported. Also, said Henriksen, next week at Libby Dam, they may be testing each of the five units, which will increase flow from 4 Kcfs to 5 Kcfs for a few hours. We're working to minimize that operation to avoid drafting the project, she said.

11. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, February 4. Henriksen noted that, at that meeting, the TMT will be asked to take up the ongoing discussion of the 2004 summer spill program. This will be an opportunity for technical input to this regional discussion, she said; I think we all understand that the actual decision will be made at a higher level than TMT. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.

TMT PARTICIPANT LIST

January 21, 2004

Name	Affiliation
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Mary Karen Scullion	COE
Mike O'Bryant	CBB
Kyle Martin	CRITFC
Cindy Henriksen	COE
Tony Norris	USBR
Scott Bettin	BPA
Scott Boyd	COE
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Nic Lane	BPA
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