

# COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

## TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

August 26, 2004 Conference Call

### FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg

The following notes are a summary of issues discussed on today's conference call. These notes are not intended to be the "record" of the call, only a reminder for TMT members. See the Meeting Minutes for more details of the discussion and considerations.

#### **End of MOP Operation in Lower Snake River:**

At yesterday's TMT meeting, Cindy Henriksen, COE put forth a proposal from the action agencies for operations of Lower Snake projects during a planned outage at Lower Monumental. The COE proposed to hold LoMo steady at 23 kcfs out (5 kcfs speed no load, 18 kcfs over the spillway). To accommodate needs for the outage, LGS would fill above MOP Monday and Tuesday and LoMo would fill above MOP Tues/Wed. ICH would remain at MOP until 9/3 and fill over the Labor Day weekend.

In response, the salmon managers recommended that the COE fill the pools of LGS and LoMo at a rate consistent with TDG standards of 120% on 8/30-31 and 110% after 9/1, but delay end of MOP and refill completion until 9/15.

The action agencies agreed to review the data and a conference call was set for today to follow-up with a possible new plan.

Nic Lane, BPA, explained that the action agencies had discussed the issue internally with their biologists and they had reviewed the BiOp and Water Management Plans for further guidance. BPAs biologist reported a low number of fish in the system and expects no change to occur in the environmental conditions until the fish had passed LGR—where they will be transported, instead of staying in-river. Based on this, Nic presented a revised plan, consistent with past operations at this time of year, that was also supported by COE:

Hold the projects within MOP on Monday and Tuesday. Beginning September 1, lift the MOP restrictions and fill some into LGS and LoMo during the planned outage. This will likely result in 3' being stored at LGS and 2' at LoMo.

While NOAA's Paul Wagner expressed a willingness to support this changed operation as a positive movement on behalf of the interests stated at yesterday's TMT meeting, Steve Haeseker, on behalf of USFWS, OR and ID did not. He noted that this was not as much movement towards the mid-September goal as he and others had hoped for, a time during which the DWR water was anticipated for use to protect migrating juveniles and adults via both temperature and flow augmentation. While Steve said he and the others are not supportive of the proposal, they did not choose to elevate the issue to IT.

The Nez Perce tribe also was not supportive of the proposal as they believe only 9% of the Clearwater system's migrating juveniles have passed LGR. Dave Statler and Greg Haller explained that those fish are very important to the tribe and will require additional cool water and flow to assist with their passage. To address these concerns directly, Greg Haller, on behalf of the Tribe, requested that formal consultation between the COE's General and the Tribal Chair, Anthony Johnson occur as soon as possible on this issue.

### ***1. MOP Operation on the Lower Snake River***

Silverberg said the purpose of today's conference call was to discuss the timing of the end of the minimum operating pool restrictions at Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor Dams. She reminded the group that, at yesterday's TMT meeting, the Corps had proposed to refill Little Goose and Lower Monumental pools during next week's scheduled powerhouse outage at Lower Monumental; Ice Harbor would then be refilled over Labor Day weekend. Flow through the Lower Snake would be held to a constant 23 Kcfs through the week. The salmon managers said they would prefer that the pools not be refilled above MOP, except for that volume necessary to avoid exceeding the state gas cap, until after the Dworshak flow augmentation volume is exhausted on September 15. The action agencies agreed to further discuss that proposal, hence today's call.

Our proposal, after discussing the salmon managers' proposal internally, is much the same as yesterday's, said Nic Lane. He discussed the biological criteria laid out in the BiOp. We would propose holding the pools at MOP until August 31, and lift the MOP restriction beginning September 1. Bob Heinith said CRITFC has been trying to find out where, in the Fish Passage Plan, the Lower Monumental outage is covered; Appendix A, Henriksen replied.

Which agencies are in favor of BPA's proposed operation? asked Dave Statler. The Corps can certainly support BPA's recommendation, Henriksen replied, although we presented a somewhat different proposal at yesterday's TMT meeting. So it's an action agency proposal? Statler asked. Correct, Silverberg replied.

Wagner said NOAA Fisheries is OK with BPA's proposed operation. The concern raised by salmon managers at yesterday's meeting was that water from Dworshak would be used to refill the Lower Snake pools; NOAA Fisheries did not fully share that concern, he said, but went along with it yesterday. The BiOp isn't completely clear on this issue, he said, and what BPA is now proposing represents a more satisfactory compromise. There is no real specificity, in terms of actual dates, in the BiOp, Wagner said.

Steve Haeseker said he doesn't see this proposal as much of a compromise; it only delays the start of refill for two days, and does little to address the salmon managers' concerns -- Dworshak water would still be used to fill the pools. I guess we appreciate your consideration of our proposal, he said.

There are still Clearwater River subyearling chinook moving through the system, according to Billy Connor, said Greg Haller. Also, said Statler, there is still a water

temperature concern; although we have received some relief in recent days, the Hells Canyon outflow temperature at Oxbow is still 71 degrees. Once the weather warms up again, he said, temperature will once again be a concern in the Lower Snake, and if the pools are filled above MOP, that will reduce the effectiveness of the cold water from Dworshak, the volume of which is already going to be reduced beginning September 1. I don't believe it would be a prudent action until ambient natural cooling begins, he said.

In response to a question from Silverberg, Pam Kingsbury of BPA said the expectation is that refill of both Little Goose and Lower Monumental pools would likely begin on Tuesday; how quickly they fill will depend on inflows. She added that Little Goose pool will be filled by three feet, Lower Monumental pool by two, a total volume of about 20 ksf.

Our feeling is that there are very low numbers of fish in the river, although we recognize that these are important fish, said Lane; also, the conditions these fish face would not change until they reach Lower Granite. We also have adults present, he added. Statler replied that less than 9% of the Clearwater fall chinook outmigrants have passed Lower Granite at this date; these fish are, as you state, very important to the Nez Perce Tribe.

The recent NOAA Fisheries findings letter on summer spill shows juvenile survival running at a deficit, observed Bob Heinith – how will the operation to which you're agreeing help juveniles? My read is that augmentation from Dworshak has two seasons of operation, replied Wagner – during the first season, it provides flow augmentation to decrease juvenile travel time, provide better in-river conditions and increase survival. That season is coming to an end; the spill season is also coming to an end, and the water that is now coming out of Dworshak is primarily beneficial from the standpoint of maintaining environmental conditions in the reservoirs, not to reduce travel time. Without the whole package of spill and flow augmentation, NOAA doesn't share the other salmon managers' view that the flow augmentation facet will make a significant difference to survival at this point in the season. Its environmental control benefit is important to both juvenile and adult migrants, he added.

Wouldn't you agree that decreasing travel time through the Lower Snake would be beneficial to juvenile migrants? Heinith asked. Possibly in terms of reducing predation, Wagner replied. Even if it's a small benefit, would you agree that it is still a benefit? Heinith asked. I'm not sure, Wagner replied – the data on larger outmigrants, which spend more time in the river system, isn't clear on whether or not speeding their outmigration provides a benefit at this time of year. He added that, according to the data from the Anatone gauge, water temperatures have cooled from 73 degrees to 67.5 degrees in recent days, so cooling is already occurring. The likelihood of temperatures significantly rebounding, given the shorter days from here on out, is low.

Statler said that question is open to debate. He added that he has consistently argued that the fish do not pay attention to an artificial cutoff date for flow augmentation and spill of August 31. And we have accepted your argument, Wagner replied; fish are clearly still present in the system, which is why NOAA Fisheries agreed to move a portion of the Dworshak volume into September.

Is there anything the action agencies have heard today that would change what you've proposed to do? Silverberg asked. The operation we're proposing is similar to what we've done in past years, Lane replied; at this time, we're not really amenable to doing anything different than what we've proposed. The discussion then turned to the elevations needed to ensure adequate conditions at the adult ladders; Heinith noted that Bjorn's data shows little difference, in adult passage success, when the ladders are in compliance and when they're up to two feet out of compliance.

What I'm hearing, then, is that most of the salmon managers, with the exception of NOAA Fisheries, are concerned about the proposed Lower Snake operation, said Silverberg; I've also heard that the tribes are very concerned about the 91% of the Clearwater fall chinook run that has yet to pass Lower Granite. We have also heard that NOAA does not oppose the operation, and the action agencies intend to implement it. Does anyone wish to elevate this issue for IT consideration? she asked.

After a brief caucus break, Haller asked whether the action agencies feel this decision is consistent with Judge Redden's decision. Yes, Lane replied. We don't agree, said Haller, while we're not going to elevate it to IT at this time, the Nez Perce Tribe is requesting formal consultation on this issue between the Corps General and the Tribal Executive Committee here in Lapwai. Haeseker said the Fish and Wildlife Service also disagrees with the action agencies' planned operation, as do ODFW, WDFW and IDFG; however, he said he did not want not elevate this issue to IT. Statler suggested that Silverberg call Ron Boyce and Russ Kiefer to see whether or not they wish to elevate this issue; she agreed to do so.

What is the Corps' response to our request for formal consultation? Haller asked. I will pass the message forward through our chain of command, Henriksen said. Haller said the General or his staff can call him, Dave Statler, or Nez Perce Tribal Chair Anthony Johnson directly. With that, the August 26 TMT conference call was adjourned. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.

### **List of TMT Participants**

**August 26, 2004**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Cindy Henriksen	COE
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Mike O'Bryant	CBB
Nic Lane	BPA
Kyle Martin	CRITFC
Bob Heinith	CRITFC

Steve Haeseker	USFWS
Margaret Filardo	FPC
Paul Wagner	NOAAF