

**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
MEETING NOTES
September 8, 2004
CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM HOUSE
PORTLAND, OREGON**

TMT Internet Homepage: <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/index.html>

DRAFT

1. Greeting and Introductions

The September 8 Technical Management Team, Libby subgroup, conference call was chaired by Rudd Turner 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 Turner at 503/808-3935.

Turner explained that this conference call was convened because of the need to seek input on the current Libby operation. My understanding is that we are still working off SOR 2004 MT-2, said Turner; the understanding was that we would hold 12.5 Kcfs outflow at Libby until elevation 2439 feet was reached, some time around September 15. John Wellschlager observed that, because the Montana SOR was not agreed to fully, the project actually is being operated as specified in the letter from Bob Lohn, NOAA Fisheries regional director.

Turner said Libby is currently at 2444.8 feet; inflow to the project has increased to about 11 Kcfs in recent days. The current STP model run shows inflows decreasing in the next few days; the Corps expects to reach elevation 2439' by September 30. The project then would ramp down outflow gradually according to the BiOp ramp rates to reach the project's minimum outflow of 4 Kcfs by October 7.

Wellschlager said he does not believe that the NOAA Fisheries letter anticipated that 12.5 Kcfs outflow would continue through September 30. What biological needs are we addressing by maintaining that level of outflow? he asked. Brian Marotz replied that the optimal quantity of wetted riffle habitat in the Kootenai River is maintained at 9 Kcfs outflow from Libby; he recommended that Libby outflow be ramped down to 9 Kcfs as soon as possible. That would allow us to avoid a sudden reduction in Libby outflow, he said, to avoid stranding.

Wellschlager said that this is normally the time of year when BPA is allowed a certain degree of flexibility in Libby operations; he observed that a flow range of 9 to 12.5 Kcfs doesn't provide a great deal of flexibility. BPA would like to support Montana's SOR, he said, but no one anticipated that that would include releasing a flat 12.5 Kcfs until September 30. Montana's preference would be to maintain as flat a flow as possible through the end of September, said Jim Litchfield. And our preferred operation would be to preserve opportunities to make money for our ratepayers, said Wellschlager; if we're handcuffed at one of our headwater projects, at this

time of year, that's a problem for BPA. It could be that the actual operation will be very close to what Montana is requesting, he said, but again, we would prefer to keep our options open. Chris Ross noted that the Council's Mainstem Amendments stipulate a draft to 2439' at Libby by the end of September. Marotz observed that, if operational flexibility is the goal, given the ramp rates in the Biological Opinion, BPA would have a greater degree of flexibility at a target outflow of 9 Kcfs than they would at 4 Kcfs. That's a fair statement, said Wellschlager.

The group spent a few minutes discussing the available operational alternatives at Libby. Litchfield said Montana is willing to live with a weekly average flow, which provides some flexibility, as long as elevation 2439' is achieved by September 30. The group discussed an operation under which the Corps would target elevation 2439' at Libby by September 30, releasing whatever week-average flow is necessary to achieve that elevation, with a hard constraint of a minimum outflow of 9 Kcfs and a maximum outflow above 12.5 Kcfs (the project could discharge as much as 20 Kcfs) as necessary to achieve the September 30 target elevation while avoiding flooding. Libby outflow would then be ramped down to 4 Kcfs by October 7, at the rates described in the Biological Opinion. Ultimately, the group endorsed this operation, but with the proviso that the action agencies will make best effort to implement these parameters. It was agreed to maintain an average Libby outflow of 12.5 Kcfs at least over the next week; the TMT will revisit this topic at its September 15 meeting.

Ross asked what biological monitoring is planned under the flat Libby operation through the end of September. Marotz said Montana has developed a monitoring plan, and BPA has agreed to fund it; however, the contract has not yet been signed, and the additional personnel have not yet been hired. No additional new field data will be collected until those people are hired. There will be hydrologic data collected, which will be run through biological models. Cathy Hlebechuk noted that an ongoing USGS research project below Bonneville might limit the operational flexibility to drop flows too low.

Ross then raised another Libby issue: the Libby outage over the weekend, which caused flows to drop as low as 1.7 Kcfs for an hour, followed by seven hours at 3.9 Kcfs. He said the action agencies need to think about ways to avoid slamming the project shut when unscheduled outages occur, perhaps through spill. He asked the group to consider the available operational alternatives that might be put in place when outages occur. Scott Bettin noted that the problem with spill is that, with a flow of only 1.7 Kcfs, any spill would significantly increase TDG levels downstream.

David Wills said the Fish and Wildlife Service would like to be clear that the group, today, reached agreement on a Libby operation through September 30; however, that this does not constitute a consensus that the group agreed to support the Council's Mainstem Amendments. With that, today's conference call was adjourned.

TMT Participant List

September 8, 2004

Name	Affiliation
Rudd Turner	COE
Cindy Henriksen	COE
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Brian Marotz	Montana
David Wills	USFWS
Bob Hallock	USFWS
John Wellschlager	BPA
Scott Bettin	BPA
Chris Ross	NOAAF
Greg Hoffman	COE
Steve Kearns	BPA