

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

January 5, 2005

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.

Issues for Discussion from 2004 Lessons Learned

As the New Year began, TMT members were asked if they had any other follow-up comments from the lessons learned discussions in November & December:

- One member reflected that he and others need to **pay more attention to the planning process** and not just on adaptive management. While some issues can be managed in-season, others, especially those with known controversy around them, would be better suited to discussion during the planning phase for inclusion in the Water Management Plan.
 - To make progress on this, the group should highlight the areas where there is new or expected information so that everyone has an expectation that a discussion is needed prior to a decision being made.
ACTION: TMT should develop a list of the issues members think will be difficult this year and begin working through them to reach resolution, sooner than later.

- One issue that may need further discussion due to new information (and soon): **transportation** and the planned starting date of April 20th. New information has come out that should be discussed more completely. The question is--where should those discussions occur and who should be part of them? Is there a way for the group to get out of entrenched positions and start fresh with new ideas and information about spill, bypass and transport? Options discussed included:
 - Hold an informal work session of TMT, with some invited experts, to review the current state of information, discuss the pros, cons and uncertainties of what is known, and then reach a consensus on action for this spring based on that information; or
 - Develop a formal proposal for a regional symposium that reviews the science, does a weight of evidence analysis, and produces concrete actions to follow.

Some noted that other regional bodies are engaged in discussions or decision processes that have bearing on the transportation issue such as SCT, FPOM and AFEP. If a more formal approach is taken, they should be part of the symposium. Also, the discussion may need to be expanded to include both spring and summer. However, if this were to occur, it may need to be done in two separate discussions or (some felt) it will be too big to get done. The COE noted that these

discussions need to occur very quickly (i.e. by the end of January would be preferred) if they are to have an impact on this year's management actions.

ACTION: TMT members will consider whether they would like to proceed with the informal approach to the transportation issue by Friday January 7, 2005.

- **If yes, what information or presentations are needed for a thorough discussion? Are there UPAs or legal implications that should be considered prior to such a discussion? Who is willing to help plan such a meeting (whether it is a meeting or a symposium)? When should the discussion take place?**
- **If no (to the informal process) how should the issue move forward? Answers should be emailed to Donna Silverberg by end of business Friday 1/7/05.**

ACTION: Paul Wagner will address the question: How much flexibility is given in the new BiOp for management adjustments to be made in-season based on recommendations from TMT (and other Regional Forum bodies)?

- Finally, it was noted that flood control operations and implications of the drum gate work scheduled later this year will need further discussion at upcoming TMT meetings.

Chum Update

Oregon Rep, Ron Boyce, said that no chum were observed at the last survey on 12/28. He said that detailed information about redd elevations will be shared at the January 19 TMT meeting. He will do his best to get information out to TMT members prior to that meeting. The estimate on total returns of chum in 2004 will be shared with the group as soon as it is complete. The COE is operating the tailwater at BON to a minimum of 11.9'.

- The action agencies noted that, in the future, it would be useful to have the redd elevations sooner to assure for effective management.

Water Management Plan

The COE told the group that the Fall Winter Update has been added to the website for review and comment by TMT and others. Additionally, comments from CRITFC and WA about the WMP have been added. COE is still waiting for comments from other agencies. OR's rep said his agency had internal discussions and decided not to provide comments this year. ID's rep noted their comments will be delivered shortly.

ACTION: The action agencies will let the group know whether or not they will provide formal responses to the state and tribal agencies' comments on the WMP as soon as possible.

Status of Operations

HH is at elevation 2542.1, discharging to meet Columbia Falls minimums.

GCL is at 1286.7

LIB is at 2409.4', ramping down to minimum flows

- A question was asked about: why is any water being released from LIB given the predictions of a very low flow year? The initial response was to provide benefit to resident fish and

benthic production in the river banks. **ACTION: Russ Keifer will discuss the issue with Brian Marotz (MT) and Dave Wills will discuss with USFWS biologists and bring the issue back to TMT for an update.**

- **ACTION: COE will respond to questions about flood control flexibility for the projected drought year at the next TMT meeting 1/19.**

ALB is at 2055.4' (trying to maintain the 2055-2056 elevation)

DWR is at 1549.35' and hit 1548.5' at the end of December

- **ACTION: COE will check on the cause of spill observed at the project in December and report to TMT.**

TDA is expecting a planned outage in February. COE will report when they know more.

BON has been operating at 158 kcfs.

The COE stated that they are currently waiting for the final forecast to determine operations at LIB and DWR. They plan to do an ESP analysis for possible flexibility at DWR for power needs.

- **ACTION: COE will provide TMT information about the timeline and procedure for making power flexibility decisions at DWR. This information will also be included in the WMP.**

Power System: The BPA rep thanked the group for its assistance with flexibility needs at BON in December. He also noted that with the predicted cold snap, more water may need to move through the system to meet demand.

Water Quality: The Water Quality Team is discussing the possibility of moving a number of gas monitors in the system. If TMT members are interested they are welcome to join the discussion (**NOTE:** this meeting has been re-scheduled for January 24, NOT 1/10 as reported at the TMT meeting).

Next Agenda for 1/19/2005 meeting

- Chum elevations and estimated total returns for 2004
- Libby Selector Gates
- Water Supply Forecast
- Flood Control and flexibility issues
- DWR: Flexibility criteria & impacts on 'other operations'; Update on Dec. spill
- Decision regarding transportation issues workshop/symposium

Technical Management Team Meeting Notes

January 5, 2004
Brewery Blocks
Portland, OR

1. Greetings and Introductions.

Today's meeting, held at the Reservoir Control Center's swank new Brewery Blocks offices, was chaired by Cathy Hlebechuk and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at today's meeting. Anyone with questions about these notes should contact Hlebechuk at 503/808-3942.

2. Lessons Learned from 2004.

Paul Wagner said that, in the future, he would like the TMT to pay more attention to the planning process, particularly in regards to the development of the Water Management Plan. When issues arose last year, often, what we heard was, why wasn't this addressed earlier in the planning process? he said. There is often a desire to use more adaptive management during the in-season management period; however, there are certain issues that seem to recur year after year, and one of my objectives is to try to do a better job of addressing those as far in advance as possible, so people aren't taken by surprise by some significant change in plan, Wagner said.

As we go through this year's plan, I would like to highlight areas where there is new information or incomplete information, so that people have an idea where various agencies are in advance, he continued. During the most recent chum operation, for example, there was a desire on the part of the management agencies to have a firm operation, while the salmon managers wanted to retain some flexibility. Sometimes, when you look at the operation a month ahead, things can be pretty vague, Wagner said. I'd like to try to bring the present into the future as much as possible this year, he said. So you'd like to try to identify some of the more controversial upcoming issues ahead of time, so that we can address them and attempt to reach agreement prior to the in-season management period? Silverberg asked. Essentially, yes, Wagner replied.

The problem is that, when we're caught in a crisis, it's hard to stay ahead of the curve, said John Wellschlager. I agree that it would be useful to try to do that this year, if we can. The issue that leaps immediately to mind is transportation, said Wagner – we should probably discuss what the new transportation program will be, under the 2004 BiOp. There are new criteria for deciding the spill vs. transport question; there is a stream of information that is continuing to come in about the benefits of transportation, and it would be worth our time to discuss that new information in advance of the transportation season. I'll put that on the agenda for our next meeting, Silverberg said.

Russ Kiefer noted that Idaho will be providing its comments on the 2005 WMP soon. One of the things we say in those comments is that there is new information available on transport; one of our comments was that we look forward to discussing that information and its accompanying analysis. We discussed this yesterday at FPAC; I was concerned about the fact that the current draft of the WMP says we will not initiate transport until April 20. That is going to be a critical issue, and it seems to have been decided without input from the region. We talked

about how we can get out of entrenched positions, open our minds, look at the information and explore the management possibilities. We need to talk about the transition points – how we decide when to bypass fish and leave them in the river, and when to go to transportation. One of the things we talked about was the possibility of holding a symposium on this specific issue, he said – what is the flow level at which we would cut off spill and go to maximum transportation?

How does that sound to the action agencies? Silverberg asked. I like the idea of having an index based on the water year, said Wellschlager; that's an unofficial reaction, but I think such an index could be useful. Does the idea of a separate symposium make sense to you? Silverberg asked. I think that, from the standpoint of heading off contention, it would make sense, said Kiefer. The dates are all laid out for us, Wagner observed – the question is, do those dates fully reflect the most current information, including the new information about the response of steelhead to transportation? Wellschlager noted that there is an obvious conflict between the salmon managers' desire for operational flexibility, and the action agencies' need for well-defined operational parameters for power, flood control etc.

Rudd Turner said that, with respect to transport, if TMT gets involved in the transportation discussion, it would become the third group in the region that is actively discussing that issue. The others are SCT and FPOM. If we want to do a symposium, we should try to do that quickly – in the next two or three weeks – to help inform our discussion of the Fish Passage Plan and the RSW decision process the SCT is involved in.

We recognize the fact that well-defined dates and triggers are important to the action agencies, said Kiefer. It was agreed that Silverberg will work with Wills and Hlebechuk to organize the symposium. Ron Boyce observed that it will take some time to plan this symposium, if it is to address the full range of available new information; it is probably unreasonable to expect it to happen in January. One of the things we've heard today is that, in order to impact the 2005 management process, the symposium needs to happen very quickly. Still, one thing we don't need is another half-baked symposium with no ownership, Boyce observed. I agree that we need to work with the action agencies in developing that, however, he said.

Wagner noted that the Fish Passage Plan could recognize that there is ongoing work on this issue, and that the actual management approach may change. To my mind, the information on the benefits of spill at lower flows is the critical management issue, as laid out in the Williams et al tech memo, Boyce said; unless things change quickly, it's starting to look as though that's exactly the scenario we're going to see this April. Dave Statler noted that there are also many questions associated with the benefits of spill vs. transportation during the summer period – it is important to understand and recognize what we don't know, as well as what we do know, he said. He noted that there is a January 13 AFEP meeting in Walla Walla on fall chinook studies that will address some of these summer transport vs. spill issues.

After a few minutes of further discussion, it was agreed that there would be value in a transportation vs. spill symposium; however, more discussion is needed before the scope, date and agenda are set in stone. It was further agreed that, rather than a formal symposium, the process might take the form of a targeted TMT work session. Silverberg asked the TMT

participants to let her know by Friday where they stand on the symposium issue. Statler added that a further benefit of such a symposium or work session would be to clarify the adaptive management component of the UPA.

One other lesson learned I would like to address is flood control operations, said Boyce; I'd like a good understanding of the drum gate work at Grand Coulee, for example, and what flexibility may exist in flood control operations given the fact that this is likely to be a low runoff year. Kyle Martin said a recent tribal/state tech memo discusses the lessons learned in 2004, including the fact that, in 2004, some opportunities were missed in terms of modifying flood control drafts. Wellschlager and Tony Norris said their agencies will be providing a written response to this technical memo.

3. Chum Update.

Boyce said he had sent out a report indicating that the last chum spawning survey of the season was done on December 28; no chum were observed, although five live fall chinook were seen. He said ODFW, WDFW and the USFWS are putting together the data on GPS redd locations and elevations; that information will be presented at the January 19 TMT meeting. Do you have an estimate on the total return this year? Wellschlager asked. Not yet, but we're working up that information as well, Boyce replied. Boyce added that it was his understanding that, after the third bump, the Bonneville tailwater elevation would be maintained until the chum redd elevation data was available. The last instruction we issued was that the tailwater elevation range specified 11.9 to 12.3 feet, Hlebechuk replied. I thought it was 12.1-12.3 feet, said Boyce. I'm recalling that our last agreement was 11.9-12.3 feet, with 11.9 feet as the lower-end minimum until your survey was done, said Wellschlager. Wagner noted that there was some frustration about the lack of clarity regarding the operation that would begin once chum spawning was officially over, and the "top" was lifted off. So 11.9 feet will remain the 24-hour minimum tailwater elevation? Boyce asked. Correct, was the reply. If it would be possible to maintain whatever we got down to over the weekend until we complete our mapping, that would be helpful, said Boyce. We did get down to 11.9 feet during certain hours over the weekend, Hlebechuk said. We'll get the redd mapping information to the TMT as soon as it's available, Boyce added. Would it be possible to get the redd elevation data a little sooner next year? Larry Beck asked. We'll talk about that, Boyce replied.

4. 2005 Water Management Plan.

Hlebechuk said that, to date, the Corps has received comments on the 2005 Water Management plan only from CRITFC and Washington; we're waiting for comments from the other TMT participants. Kiefer said IDFG has sent its comments to the Governor's office, and they should be approved and forwarded to the Corps soon. Boyce said Oregon will not be providing WMP comments this year. Will the action agencies respond formally to the comments received? Martin asked. We haven't decided yet, Norris replied. Turner added that the draft fall/winter update is linked to the on-line version of the WMP.

5. Status of Operation.

Norris said Hungry Horse is currently at 3542.1 feet, discharging to meet the Columbia Falls minimum, 3.6 Kcfs. Grand Coulee is at 1286.7 feet. Hlebechuk said Libby is at 2409.4 feet, currently ramping down from four units to minimum outflow. The December 31 elevation at the project was 2410.7 feet. We're also working on an outage at Libby, which has been postponed for some time now, which will require the transmission line to be out of service for 12 hours. We will operate at speed-no-load (2 Kcfs) during the outage while spilling up to the 120% TDG cap, as best we can.

Why do you need to spill? Kiefer asked. To maintain the minimum flow of 4 Kcfs, Hlebechuk replied. When inflow to Libby is 1.8-1.9 Kcfs, why do we have a minimum flow of 4 Kcfs? Kiefer asked. Average inflow the last 20 days was 4.5 Kcfs, said Hlebechuk; 4 Kcfs is the minimum flow that was coordinated. It has been lower in the past, she added. The concern is that, at lower flows, more of the benthic area would be exposed to cold air, killing off its biological productivity, said Adams. I don't think it's a BiOp requirement at this time of year, however, added David Wills. Your interest is trying to save water in Libby during a drought year? Silverberg asked. Yes, Kiefer replied. Hlebechuk suggested that Kiefer contact Montana's Brian Merotz regarding this issue.

At a late November TMT meeting, we were discussing Libby, said Kiefer; it was releasing 20-25 Kcfs to meet its December 31 flood control elevation. I asked that the action agencies consider what flexibility they might have to increase that flood control elevation, because all of the long-range forecasts I was seeing were predicting a drought year in 2005. I would challenge that statement, said Wellschlager. The Corps has drafted to 2411 by December 31 every year, said Hlebechuk; under the new BiOp, we can increase the Libby's December 31 flood control elevation if the December final forecast shows 95% of average or less for that basin. It came in at 98%, so we stayed at 2411. Martin noted that NOAA's most recent forecast shows a cold, dry January, with near-normal precipitation in February and March. None of our forecasters are hanging their hat on a below-average water year, Wellschlager observed – there are just too many variables between now and this spring. Kiefer expressed frustration that he had asked the Corps to investigate what flexibility might exist, but received no reply until today's meeting. Again, my concern is that we're continuing to draft Libby, despite the fact that more and more forecasters are predicting a below-average water year. I simply wanted to know whether there is an opportunity to conserve some water now, he said.

Moving on, Hlebechuk said Albeni Falls is releasing 17 Kcfs; the elevation range at that project increased to 2055-2056 on January 1. Current Albeni Falls elevation is 2055.4. Dworshak is releasing minimum outflow and is at 1549.3 feet, currently, up from 1540.7 on December 15 and 1548.5 feet on December 31. We're waiting for the January final Libby and Dworshak forecasts, which should be available on Monday, January 10; those will be used to determine how much flexibility we have in setting the January 31 flood control elevations at those projects. At Bonneville, average flow has been 158 Kcfs over the last 20 days.

With respect to potential flexibility at Dworshak, the WMP doesn't really speak to that issue, Wagner said. We need to change that, said Hlebechuk. It would be nice to have more

information about timeline, procedure and criteria for making that decision, Wagner said.

On the power system front, Wellschlager thanked the salmon managers for working with the action agencies on the Bonneville flow issue. He noted that it is cold outside, and loads are up; it could get even colder next week, which means that we may be pushing more water through the system.

Jim Adams said that, with respect to water quality, there have been recent WQT discussions about the fixed monitoring station below Bonneville Dam, as well as moving some of the gauges at the Lower Snake projects and at McNary. We're thinking of using the Cascade Island gauge to manage spill at Bonneville in 2005, and eliminating the Warrendale gauge, he explained. Adams encouraged any TMT participants who are interested in this topic to attend the next Water Quality Team meeting.

Hlebechuk added that the Corps is planning four hours of spill, most likely on February 22, at The Dalles, for vortex testing at spill bay 6.

6. Next TMT Meeting Date.

Next Technical Management Team meeting was set for Wednesday, January 19. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle. (meeting lasted 2.5 hours)

**TMT Participant List
January 5, 2005**

Name	Affiliation
David Wills	USFWS
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Tony Norris	USBR
Paul Wagner	NOAAF
John Wellschlager	BPA
Jim Adams	COE
Russ Kiefer	IDFG
Kyle Martin	CRITFC
Russ George	WMCI
Nic Lane	BPA
Laura Hamilton	COE

Ruth Burris	PGE
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Rudd Turner	COE
Tim Heizenrater	PPM
Larry Beck	COE
Kevin Bannister	PNGC
Lee Corum	PNUC
Karl Kanbergs	COE
Tina Lundell	COE
Ron Boyce	ODFW
Kevin Nordt	Mid-Cs
David Benner	FPC
Greg Hoffman	COE
Glenn Traeger	Avista
Cindy LeFleur	WDFW
Martin Hatscher	SCL
Tom Le	PSE