

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM CONFERENCE CALL

September 14, 2005

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg

Notes: Robin Harkless

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.

Dworshak Operations

The COE reported that Dworshak was currently releasing 7.1 kcfs, releasing temperatures of 47-48°. The project was planned to reduce to 3.5 kcfs later this evening (9/14), and further reduce to minimum flows on Saturday, 9/17. The COE asked for feedback from TMT on their preference for how to operate the project until Saturday, to get at the appropriate temperatures. The salmon managers and Nez Perce Tribe, with no objection from the rest of TMT, recommended that the project be operated at two units in undershot mode, which would produce temperatures of about 47°.

Lower Granite Operations

Rick Davis, Port Manager of the Port of Clarkston, spoke on behalf of SOR 2005-19 sent to the COE from the Towboat Association, which requested that Lower Granite be operated at a minimum elevation of 738' as soon as possible to address safety concerns for cruise and tow boats passing in and out of the Lewiston and Clarkston ports over the next few weeks. Following Rick's in-depth description of the problems (see Meeting Minutes for details), TMT asked a number of questions to clarify the situation.

The salmon managers said that from a fish perspective, they would not normally recommend going to a full pool at this time because of uncertainty around temperature and flow issues. However, given the serious safety concerns this year, they deferred to the COE, BPA and operators to determine the best operation from a safety perspective.

Bob Heinith, CRITFC, offered the tribes perspective: The project is already at MOP+2 and if the pool is filled now, it will cause problems for fish in terms of temperature and flow. They would prefer to stay the course for fish until the end of September.

ACTION: Walla Walla COE did not have information from this year's surveys of navigation channels, and said it would be available at the end of September or early October. Without this information, the COE recommended operating the project at 736-737' with an operating range of MOP +3 or MOP +4, until the surveys were available. The COE also wanted to monitor cooling for fish concerns. They anticipate using a full

operating range in October if possible, when cooling occurs. If the surveys show a problem that supports a safety emergency, the requested operation can continue.

Rick Davis objected to the recommendation, to go any lower than 737'. He agreed to follow-up directly with the Chief at the Walla Walla COE to discuss whether his request could be met.

UPDATE: Cathy Hlebechuk, COE, sent the following message to TMT following the conference call:

'The project, currently being operated 734' - 735', is expected to fill to 736.5' - 737.5' in the next 2 - 4 days and will operate in this new range until the surveys come in.'

1. Greetings and Introductions.

Today's Technical Management Team conference call 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 or comments about today's meeting should contact Cindy Henriksen at 503-808-3945.

2. Dworshak Operations.

Hlebechuk said Dworshak is currently releasing 7.1 Kcfs, with temperatures in the 47 degree F range. Tonight, the project will be reducing to 4.7 Kcfs; on Saturday night, it will drop to minimum outflow. With respect to temperatures, said Jim Adams, Unit 2 is in overshot mode, and Unit 1 is in undershot mode, resulting in temperatures of 47-48 degrees. Between now and Saturday, once we go to minimum outflow, we'll have the option of a range of 47 degrees to 53 degrees, in terms of release temperature. Dave Wills said Dworshak Hatchery would prefer temperatures of closer to 47 degrees, with the units in undershot mode. Kyle Dittmer said the Nez Perce Tribe concurs. We'll put both units in undershot mode, said Adams.

3. Lower Granite Operations.

On September 12, the action agencies received SOR 2005-19. This SOR, supported by the Columbia River Towboat Association and the ports of Clarkston and Lewiston, requested the following operations:

- A special operation of Lower Granite Reservoir that would terminate operations to accommodate outmigrating salmonids earlier than normal, and would increase reservoir elevation to the upper foot of normal pool range to address navigation concerns. Operation of Lower Granite reservoir in the upper foot of the pool would restore the 14-foot authorized depth in most parts of the channel.

Rick Davis from the Port of Clarkston said he had requested this meeting because of safety issues. Dworshak outflow is being reduced, but a lot of silt has already been pushed down the river from that project. It has become a real hazard at the Port of Lewiston – they're sticking barges all the time. Container movement is also a problem – the barges have to back out to where the water is deep enough. Shoaling is a real problem. September and October are the worst months, in terms of the cruise boats, which draft about 8 feet. The Columbia Queen left our dock a couple of weeks ago and encountered a shoal, said Davis; they hit the shoal and took in a lot of sand, and burnt out their engine. That's a real problem. They leave at 2 pm; what happens is that from noon to about 4 pm, the pool fluctuates about two feet. The pool is supposed to be held at 734 +1, and it makes it very difficult for our boats. The Empress of the North drafts 12 feet, and it can't come in here. What we're going to end up doing is getting one of our boats hung up, and we're not going to be able to get it out, Davis said.

That's not good, Davis said – we need to be sure our boats have enough draft to operate. We don't want a hole punched in the bottom of a barge; there is a lot of grain going out of this area right now. The water is low, and the silt is coming up. We've asked you to raise the pool to elevation 738, even though that may not be possible. We need some help – we're only asking for this operation this year, because we're going to be dredged later this year. But we have boats getting stuck every day. I'm asking for your help in bringing the pool elevation up, before we have a serious accident with a barge or a cruise boat. We've been safe up to now, and while I share your concerns about fish, I'm also very concerned about safety, said Davis.

What I hear you saying is that the pool fluctuations aren't allowing for safe passage, said Silverberg – you're asking for a stable pool elevation in the top foot of the operating range. I had one question, said Hlebechuk – you mentioned a large variation in pool elevations during the day. That's right, said Davis – it seems that once they really start generating power, the pool elevation drops. I looked at the hourly Lewiston elevations for August 31, when you said one of the problems occurred, said Hlebechuk; it looked like there was no significant variation between the 734-foot elevation in the morning and the evening. The boats come in at 6.5 feet of draft, but by the time they're loaded, they draft 8 feet +, Davis replied. They come in light and leave heavy. Sometimes, they draft as much as 13-14 feet.

John Wellschlager said that BPA understands that the salmon managers' objective is to stay at MOP +1, but given these problems, I wonder whether we could go to at least MOP + 2. Dave Wills said the salmon managers discussed this topic yesterday, and from a fish

perspective, they would prefer to keep the pools at MOP + 1. However, this is purely a safety issue, and we're certainly not going to object to the action agencies going to whatever Lower Granite pool elevation they feel is appropriate, said Wills. In a normal year, because of temperature uncertainties, this would not be the salmon managers' recommendation. However, safety issues are the Corps' responsibility, and we're not going to elevate this to IT, he said – it is appropriate for the action agencies to determine the best operation under these circumstances.

Is this shoaling something that developed last winter? Ron Boyce asked. What is different this year, compared to past years? We've been having this problem for the last 4-5 years, Davis replied. In talking with others in this area, their feeling is that it is sand from Dworshak and the Clearwater that is causing this problem. When that sediment comes down, there is only one place for it to go – the Port of Lewiston. The shoal area is directly out from the dock area? Boyce asked. It is 200-250 feet straight out – north – from our dock, Davis replied. So it isn't possible for the boats and barges to avoid those shallow areas? Boyce asked. No, Davis replied.

Do you know what draft the boats are encountering problems at? Boyce asked. Everything is at least 8-9 feet, Davis replied; fully-loaded barges go down to 13.5 feet. At Clarkston, the barges are loaded to 11 feet. It sounds like there is about a 4-foot difference, said Boyce – is 737-738 absolutely required? My concern is that, to fill the Lower Granite pool by four feet, that will reduce flows downstream, which is not good for fish. Would it be possible to pick up flows elsewhere to offset that impact? Dworshak will be going to minimum outflow on Saturday, Hlebechuk reiterated. Isn't the main issue cooling? Wellschlager asked. The current temperature in the Lower Granite tailrace is 63 degrees, so we're in good shape there. Temperature is the primary concern, but flow augmentation is also important, from a biological perspective, said Boyce.

We're not stuck on elevation 738, said Davis, but for the next two months, it is imperative that we get the water elevation up. Could the shoal areas be marked with buoys? Hlebechuk asked. The Coast Guard did put in buoys, but they were gone within a day, Davis replied. Would you agree with the statement that, since Dworshak augmentation is basically over, there will be no more sediment headed downstream? Hlebechuk asked. True, but the real issue is the sediment that is already there, another participant replied.

Bob Heinith said that, from a tribal perspective, given the fact that the pool is already nearly at MOP +2, and Dworshak outflow will be reduced to minimum this weekend, the CRITFC tribes would prefer to continue with the current operation, in order to facilitate the outmigration of the Clearwater fish. For the record, the tribes do not support filling the

pools until October 1, Heinith said; hopefully, the dredging scheduled for this winter will alleviate this problem. In response to a question, Heinith said the tribes will not be elevating this issue to the IT. Wills reiterated that, while it is not the salmon managers' preference to fill Lower Granite pool at this point, they understand that this is a safety issue, and it lies within the Corps' authority to decide how best to respond to this situation.

Wellschlager suggested that it might be possible to agree on some intermediate pool elevation, to try to split the difference between the boaters' and the salmon managers' concerns. A Port of Lewiston representative said 737 is the minimum elevation that will allow safe boat and barge ingress and egress.

What would the refill rate be? Boyce asked. It wouldn't be any different than what we've done in the past, Hlebechuk replied; it would likely take place over a couple of days.

Hlebechuk requested a caucus break to allow her to confer with Walla Walla District, because of the lack of recent channel surveys. When the meeting resumed, Anne Glassley of the Corps Walla Walla District said she had talked with her chief at Walla Walla District and the decision was to go to an elevation of 736-737 in Lower Granite pool. Is the problem within the federal channel? Hlebechuk asked. It is clearly within the responsibility of the federal navigation channel, Davis replied. The most recent survey, from last year, shows the tracks the barges have plowed through the mud on their way to and from the Clarkston chip facility – the situation is more dangerous this year than last, and barges are plowing through the mud to reach the Lewiston grain facility, said another port representative. In response to a question, another representative said the barges at the Lewiston/Clarkston facility are being light-loaded.

Ultimately, Hlebechuk said the Corps is willing to operate in a 1-foot range, from 736-737 feet, through the end of September. After that date, more flexibility will be needed for power operations; most likely, 734 feet will be the minimum, and whatever the top range is will be the top range. In other words, for now, we will go to MOP +3 to MOP +4, she said. In October, we will return to the full operating range at Lower Granite.

If the survey shows that the problem exists, I assume that the Corps will accede to an operating range of 737-738 feet? Davis asked. Assuming that the Corps agrees with the results of the survey, we will operate in a range of 734-738 feet, Hlebechuk replied. And is the current court activity a concern for the Corps? Silverberg asked. Yes, Hlebechuk replied.

Davis observed that, in his opinion, safety should be the priority here – if someone gets hurt, or a barge-load of goods sinks, it isn't the Port or the boat operators that will be hurt – it is the action agencies. We need to get the water up somehow, he said. We have to get our heads out of the sand and make a decision on the safety factor, said Davis. That is a great point, said Silverberg – does a range of 736-737 satisfy your concerns? Davis replied that, in his opinion, 737 feet is the minimum safe operating elevation required.

Where does that leave us? Silverberg asked. Hlebechuk requested another caucus break. When the meeting resumed, it was agreed that the chief of Walla Walla District will confer with Davis directly. Hlebechuk said that, with respect to refill rate, a 2.5 Kcfs reduction in Lower Granite outflow will fill Lower Granite pool by half a foot per day; if the desire is to refill the pool three feet in one day, that will reduce Lower Granite outflow to zero. We won't stand in the Corps' way, Wills replied, although that would certainly not be the salmon managers' preference. It was agreed that Hlebechuk will inform the other TMT members via email of the outcome of today's discussion.

4. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next face-to-face meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, September 21. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.