

# COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

## TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

October 19, 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.

#### Chum Discussion

The salmon managers submitted SOR 2005-19, requesting a similar operation to last year: when chum are observed, operate to a minimum tailwater elevation of 11.5' at Bonneville with average daily flows not expected to exceed 125 kcfs. The action agencies agreed to the operation, and clarified that there would need to be an operating range. The participating TMT members agreed on 11.3-11.7'.

**ACTION:** Under the 'To': The salmon managers will add John Wellschlager's name and Greg Delwiche will be replaced by Steve Oliver.

The salmon managers are still in discussions about next step operations, recognizing the challenges of balancing all needs in the system. ODFW takes surveys on Tuesdays and Thursdays; to date no chum have been observed. In the past, the chum have arrived in early November. When they are observed, surveyors will notify Russ Kiefer, as the new FPAC chair, and TMT. Cindy LeFleur, WDFW, will track the Grays River and keep TMT informed as chum are observed there. The action agencies expressed appreciation to the salmon managers for putting forth the SOR well in advance of the operation. Cathy Hlebechuk said the Corps is preparing a slide to show how, when daytime flows are low and nighttime outflows are over 200,000 cfs, this impacts tailwater directly below the project but has negligible effect at Vancouver and therefore negligible effect on I-205 and Multnomah Falls spawning conditions. She said during a December 2004 event, the stage difference at Vancouver was only 1.2' and the Bonneville tailwater difference was 8'.

#### Lake Pend Oreille Operations

IDFG and the USFWS submitted SOR 2005-FWS/IDFG-2. Russ Kiefer said the SOR attempts to describe the agency's needs and to provide the action agencies with operating flexibility, e.g. specification #2: Hold Lake Pend Oreille as high as possible through October 31, and minimize the need to spill in order to reach elevation 2055' by mid-November. This type of language might be incorporated into a decision tree to be used for future years.

Idaho acknowledged that while the proposed operation will not work every year, conditions were good to request implementing it this year. It was noted that a potential burden is placed on ratepayers, and the decision tree will work to address that concern for future years. The BOR, COE, and BPA agreed to the operation and asked to hear from the salmon managers. Oregon and NOAA agreed, and since Washington had not been involved in discussions leading up to this point, chose to offer no comment. Montana was not represented at the meeting. The operation will be implemented this year, holding Lake Pend Oreille as high as possible until 31 October and drawing it down to no lower than 2055' by 20 November, preferably by 15 November. Again, the group acknowledged the good work that went into laying the foundation to make the operation happen this year. Editors note: after TMT, Cathy Hlebechuk sent this note to TMT members: At TMT I mentioned how drafting Lake Pend Oreille in the winter may or may not enhance listed Chum Salmon spawning conditions below Bonneville Dam. I failed to state that contrary to the third paragraph under Justification in SOR 2005 FWS/IDFG-2, Lake Pend Oreille is drafted in the winter for power and flood control, not for chum salmon. The draft may or may not benefit chum salmon but they are not the reason for the winter draft. Please call me if you have any concerns. No responses were received.

### **Operations Review**

*Reservoirs* – Grand Coulee was at elevation 1287.3'. Hungry Horse was at 3537.7' and operating to meet Columbia Falls (Tony Norris, BOR, noted some difficulty in doing this). Libby was at elevation 2440.9' and filling; inflows were at 17.7 kcfs. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2058.8' and releasing 17 kcfs.

*Fish – Smolts*: Paul Wagner, NOAA reported that sub-yearling numbers increased at Lower Granite and Little Goose.

*Adults*: Seven adult chum were observed at Bonneville. An error in the counting system incorrectly identified 200+ adults observed at The Dalles; the error has been corrected. Cindy LeFleur, WDFW, noted that additional adult information can be found on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) website – the link is attached to today's agenda.

*Power system* – Nothing to report at this time.

*Water quality* – Temperatures at Dworshak are at 45-47°.

### **TMT Year End Review, November 2, Portland District COE:**

An agenda is attached with the potential for some presenter names changing – the meeting will be held from 9am-3pm at the COE's Portland District building, 333 SW 1<sup>st</sup>, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. Security is tight, so anyone that plans to attend should notify Cathy Hlebechuk at the COE, 503-808-3942. Lunch will be provided for those that want it (charge is \$6.00) – RSVP to the facilitation team whether you plan to attend and if you want lunch: [ehalton@cnw.net](mailto:ehalton@cnw.net) or call 503-248-4703 no later than October 27.

## Technical Management Team Meeting Notes

October 19, 2005

### 1. Greetings and Introductions.

Today's meeting of the Technical Management Team 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 this meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should contact Hlebechuk at 503-808-3936. Silverberg congratulated Russ Kiefer on his ascension to the post of FPAC Chair.

### 2. 2005/2006 Chum Operations.

I believe there was a little bit of follow-up that was supposed to happen on this topic following our last meeting, said Silverberg – did the action agencies add some narrative? I apologize – I didn't get to that, John Wellschlager replied. I believe the salmon managers were also going to look at nighttime flows and daytime variations, and bring their recommendations back to the action agencies, said Silverberg. Was there an SOR?

What we agreed to was to submit an SOR to the action agencies regarding the start of the chum operation, even as discussions have been ongoing, Russ Kiefer replied – we appreciate the cooperation of the action agencies while those discussions have continued. Today, we wanted to put forward an SOR that would set the stage, so to speak, outlining everyone's agreement – SOR 2005-19. At yesterday's FPAC meeting, we basically reached consensus on an SOR that was roughly equivalent to last year's starting operation. We talked about waiting a week to do it, but after talking with the action agencies, decided that we would be OK with a similar operation to last year's, Kiefer said. We updated last year's language; the specifications and justification – an instantaneous tailwater elevation of 11.5 feet at Bonneville, with an average flow of 125 Kcfs – are the same as last year's SOR.

Actually, I believe that the agreement last year was that we would maintain a range of tailwater elevations at Bonneville – 11.3-11.7 feet, while targeting 11.5 feet as an average, said Wellschlager. After a few minutes of additional discussion, it was agreed that this would be an acceptable operation. Wellschlager noted that Steve Oliver should replace Greg Delwiche, who is no longer with BPA, on the TMT letterhead; my name should also be on there, Wellschlager said. In response to a question from Tony Norris, Kiefer said the salmon managers are not yet ready to put forward on a consensus operation for chum through the end of December.

Ron Boyce added that ODFW has done four chum surveys to date at the Ives/Pierce Island spawning grounds, and have found no chum so far, which is not unexpected for this date. The next survey is scheduled for tomorrow. We will notify the TMT, the FPAC chair and the action agencies as soon as chum are sighted on the spawning grounds, Boyce said. In response to a question, Cindy LeFleur said the most recent WDFW estimate is that there will be about 12,000 Lower Columbia River chum spawners in 2005.

Both Hlebechuk and Wellschlager thanked the salmon managers for coordinating this SOR ahead of time; Wellschlager said that, in his experience, no SOR has been agreed to more quickly.

### 3. Lake Pend Oreille Operations.

Kiefer noted that, in a similar vein, there has been extensive coordination on the Lake Pend Oreille SOR; it may not be what everyone wants to see, he said, but hopefully it will meet everyone's needs. He thanked the other TMT participants for their willingness to think outside the box with respect to Lake Pend Oreille operations; hopefully the result will be an operation that meets everyone's needs, Kiefer said. He noted that the salmon managers had tried to be as specific as possible in describing the operation they wanted to see, while still giving the action agencies the flexibility they need to conduct an efficient operation.

Kiefer described the specific operation described in this SOR, the full text of which is available via hot-link from today's agenda on the TMT homepage. The goal of the SOR is to hold Lake Pend Oreille at elevation as close as possible to 2059' through 31 October, after which the project will be drafted to 2055' for chum by no later than 20 November. . Editors note: after TMT, Cathy Hlebechuk sent this note to TMT members: At TMT I mentioned how drafting Lake Pend Oreille in the winter may or may not enhance listed Chum Salmon spawning conditions below Bonneville Dam. I failed to state that contrary to the third paragraph under Justification in SOR 2005 FWS/IDFG-2, Lake Pend Oreille is drafted in the winter for power and flood control, not for chum salmon. The draft may or may not benefit chum salmon but they are not the reason for the winter draft. Please call me if you have any concerns. No responses were received. Wellschlager said Bonneville has no problems with the Lake Pend Oreille operation requested in this SOR; he noted that, in about 80 percent of water years, any water released from Lake Pend Oreille during this period is passed through Grand Coulee during November and December. The only thing I would add is that, while this operation works for this specific year, it may not work for every year, Kiefer said. We would like to continue to develop a long-term decision tree that will guide Lake Pend Oreille operations in future years, Kiefer said. No additional TMT objections were raised to the proposed Lake Pend Oreille operation.

### 4. Operations Review.

Norris said Grand Coulee is currently at elevation 1287.3 feet; Hungry Horse is at elevation 3537.7 feet and struggling to keep up with the Columbia Falls minimum flow requirement due to flashy rain events in recent days. Hlebechuk said the current Libby elevation is 2440.9 feet; yesterday's average inflow was 17.7 Kcfs, more than double the average of the day before, so the project is filling. Libby is releasing 4.7Kcfs. Dworshak is at elevation 1518.2 feet and releasing minimum outflow. Albeni Falls is at 2058.8 feet and releasing 17 Kcfs. Implementation of the Lake Pend Oreille SOR will begin this afternoon.

Wagner said that, with respect to smolts, as he reported last week, yearling chinook passage increased at Lower Granite. Apparently there was a hatchery release of those yearling fish from an Idaho facility, he said; I'm not sure why. The more consistent numbers have come from the subyearlings at Lower Granite, many of which are Clearwater-origin fish. They were a surrogate group tagged by NOAA Fisheries to look at run timing. These fish are starting to show up now; we haven't seen very many wild fish to date. That's pretty much it for smolts, Wagner said.

With respect to adult passage, in looking at the dam counts for chum, there have been some discrepancies, Wagner said – the count to date at Bonneville is seven fish, while the count to date at The Dalles is 273 fish. This would indicate that something is amiss. Margaret Filardo noted that the Corps' database contained one entry showing 275 fish on September 13; this was obviously an error, she said, so we have deleted it from the Fish Passage Center database.

Cindy LeFleur said there is little further to report on the subject of adult passage, beyond the fact that there is now a link, on the Northwest Power Planning Council homepage, to the presentation WDFW gave to the Council at that group's October meeting. We're continuing to give them monthly updates, she added.

Wellschlager said there are no power system issues to report at this time. With respect to water quality, Hlebechuk said Dworshak release temperatures continue in the 45-47-degree range.

#### 5. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team, the group's annual year-end review, was set for November 2. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

#### Technical Management Team Meeting Participants

October 19, 2005

Name	Affiliation
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team



Filardo  
Benner  
Le  
Jim Shield, Pend Oreille PUD