

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

November 9, 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

As of November 9, no chum had arrived at the Ives Island complex, 2 were observed at Multnomah and 90 were observed over the fish ladder at Bonneville. The next survey was scheduled for Thursday, November 10 (since Friday is a holiday).

ACTION: Ron Boyce, ODFW, will notify the action agencies when chum are observed, at which time the following operation will be implemented (per discussions at the business portion of the TMT year end review on November 2): 11.3-11.7' daytime tailwater, 11.3' minimum at night.

SOR 2005-20

The salmon managers (except NOAA) submitted a request to the action agencies to restart the Ice/Trash Sluiceway at The Dalles and operate it at 24 hours/day through November, to support passage of later migrating juveniles. While few migrants are still passing, research shows these fish tend to produce greater adult returns, and the sluiceway is the safest passage route for the fish. A question was raised about what estimate is used to determine this, as the USGS survival study (a summer study) of The Dalles notes 73.5% survival through the sluiceway and 72.9% turbine survival. NOAA's estimate, which is based on more than just summer numbers, is 83% through turbines and 93% through the sluiceway.

NOAA offered that the recommendation put forth is biologically sound, but did not sign on to the SOR because discussions at a policy level about making the change in the Fish Passage Plan (FPP) were happening and the issue had not yet moved forward on that end.

From BPA's perspective, the operation would not be cost-effective in that it would ultimately result in a small amount of returning fish at a significant cost to ratepayers. The COE responded that they planned to continue the current operation at The Dalles, without the use of the sluiceway.

The USFWS explained that they felt it was important to raise the issue for the record – language in the FPP is vague and regional discussions are needed. From a biological perspective, the USFWS believes that operating the sluiceway through November is the best operation. IDFG

echoed that this would be a prudent action to support the fish. Washington suggested more discussion is needed on the FPP. TMT members that signed on to the SOR did not feel the issue need to be elevated to IT.

NOAA suggested that the next step on this issue will be to comment on the Fish Passage Plan. The COE noted that there will be an FPOM meeting on November 22, at which the FPP will be reviewed.

Operations Review

Reservoirs – Grand Coulee was at elevation 1287.6', maintaining a higher elevation to meet chum needs. Hungry Horse was at 3539.2' with good inflows. Libby was at elevation 2445.66'. The November early bird showed a 111% April-August forecast, so Libby is targeting 2411' end of year elevation. Albeni Falls was at 2056.65' and is expected to reach 2055' around November 16. Dworshak was operating at minimum flows, with about 2 kcfs in, and at elevation 1518.7'.

Fish – Smolts: Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported that smolt monitoring has ended, and that there was an uptake in subyearling numbers in the Lower Snake in October; it was unknown whether the fish will continue to migrate through the system or will hold over. Russ Kiefer, IDFG, reported that 7 pit-tagged yearling chinook released from the hatchery were observed at Lower Granite.

Adults: 261 fall chinook and 93 redds were observed as of 11/8 at Ives Island.

Power system – The system is set up for a chum operation, once chum are observed.

Water quality – Temperatures at Dworshak were currently at 45.3°. Dave Wills, USFWS, committed to talking with the hatchery about a ponding operation for this year.

Next Meeting, November 23, 9am-noon

Agenda Items include:

- Chum operations and issues
- Temperature and hatchery impacts at Dworshak
- 2006 WMP
- Vernita Bar elevations expected for this season
- Snow pack review

Other

- The Fish Passage Evaluation Review will be held in Walla Walla on November 14-17. Contact Larry Beck, COE, for more information.
- Comments on the Year End Review: We will need to update what we have learned, as much of the data shared was preliminary information. BPA would like to do a post-season cost review of 2005. It was noted that the spill operation pushed transmission limitations, and the TBL could do a presentation on this at a future TMT meeting. Tony Norris and John Wellschlager will take the lead on this.

Technical Management Team Meeting Notes

November 9, 2005

1. Greetings and Introductions.

Today's Technical Management Team meeting 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.

2. Chum Operation.

Hlebechuk said the action agencies have not yet received a call from ODFW indicating that the chum have begun to arrive at the lower river spawning grounds. Ron Boyce said ODFW will be doing another survey this Friday; only two live chum have been observed so far this season. Once that call is received, the operation will be to hold a Bonneville tailwater elevation of 11.3-11.7 during daytime hours and a minimum of 11.3 feet at night, Hlebechuk said.

For the benefit of the visitors present at today's meeting, David Wills provided an overview of the standard chum operation, in particular, the influence of tailwater elevations on successful chum spawning at the Ives/Pierce Island complex just below the dam. Research has shown that a minimum tailwater elevation of 11.3 feet provides good spawning conditions; it is also an elevation that can generally be maintained through the following spring, to avoid dewatering chum redds prior to the end of the incubation and emergence periods. John Wellschlager noted that this can be a tricky operation, because Bonneville tailwater elevation is also affected by other factors, including flow from the Willamette and other tributaries and tidal influences. The other thing that makes it tricky is the fact that, at this point in the season, we don't have a reliable 2006 water supply forecast, Wellschlager said. We are also refilling the upstream storage reservoirs at this point in the season, added Hlebechuk, so there isn't an unlimited supply of water to support this operation.

Cindy LeFleur said only two live chum were seen during yesterday's survey of the Multnomah Creek area; no live chum were seen at Ives Island. There is considerable activity at the Greys River spawning grounds, with more than 400 live chum seen during the October 26 survey.

On November 8, the action agencies received SOR 2005-20. This SOR, supported by USFWS, IDFG, ODFW, WDFW, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and CRITFC, requests the following specific operations:

- Immediately re-start the ice/trash sluiceway at The Dalles Dam and continue operation through the end of November. Operate the ice/trash sluiceway at The Dalles 24 hours a day.

Russ Kiefer provided an overview of this SOR, the full text of which is available via hot-link from today's agenda on the TMT homepage. He noted that the purpose of this SOR is to facilitate the passage of late-migrating juvenile fall chinook, a component of the run that typically produces very high SARs. The cost to ratepayers is relatively low, he said; research has shown that, if it is operated, up to 40% of these late outmigrants will pass the project via the ice/trash sluiceway.

John Wellschlager noted that the latest indices he has seen indicate that only 20-50 juvenile fall chinook are passing The Dalles daily. Given that fact, Bonneville would have to take issue with your characterization that this is a cost-effective operation, he said – my estimates show that the cost of 24-hour ice/trash sluiceway operation would be \$1.7 million-\$3 million through November 30. Given an expected SAR of about 3-4%, that translates into just a handful of returning adults – fewer than 10, for an investment of more than \$1 million.

David Wills noted that the SOR does not mention cost effectiveness; our perspective is that the Fish Passage Plan was unclear on this point, and this is our interpretation of how this issue should be resolved, he said. My understanding was there was a 2004 agreement at FPOM to stop operating the ice/trash sluiceway at the end of October, said Hlebechuk – I don't think anything has changed. I believe that was to be a year-to-year decision, Wills replied.

Paul Wagner said NMFS did not sign on to this SOR because it had used other venues in an attempt to resolve this issue. Our recommendation the last two years was that operation of the ice/trash sluiceway should continue through the end of November, he said. The Corps has already made that policy call, by shutting off the sluiceway in spite of NMFS' recommendation. I thought it was important, however, for the salmon managers to be on the record as saying that the Fish Passage Plan is unclear on this point, and that needs to be resolved – we do feel the sluiceway should be operated through the end of November, Wills said.

Shane Scott said that, according to the draft July 2005 USGS survival report, on page 55, the last paragraph says ice/trash sluiceway survival was 73.5%, compared to 72.9% survival through the powerhouse. Where does the 80%/100% survival, respectively, through the turbines and the sluiceway, come from? Scott asked. NMFS assumed 83% survival through the turbines and 93% survival through the ice/trash sluiceway in developing its recommendations, Wagner replied; however, those are primarily summer estimates, made at a time when predators are numerous, active and congregating at the outfall of the

ice/trash sluiceway. Scott said that, in his view, the \$1 million would better be spent on predator removal.

Again, said Wellschlager, if you do the math, we're talking about an increase of fewer than 8 returning adults for an investment of at least \$1.7 million. And again, the primary purpose of this SOR was to bring the lack of clarity on this issue, and the difference of opinion around the table, to the TMT's attention, said Wills. Rudd Turner noted that there is an FPOM meeting scheduled for November 22, at which this issue will be discussed.

What is the action agencies' response to the SOR? Silverberg asked. We're planning to operate with the ice/trash sluiceway closed at The Dalles, said Hlebechuk. After a few minutes of further discussion, Wills said the salmon managers do not plan to elevate this issue to the IT at this time. Kiefer concurred, noting that Idaho's primary purpose was to get it on the record that operation of the ice/trash sluiceway at The Dalles through the end of November would be a prudent operation.

3. Operations Review.

Tony Norris reported that Grand Coulee is currently at elevation 1287.6; Hungry Horse is at elevation 3539.2. Inflows have been good at Hungry Horse; Grand Coulee is being operated to fill as much as possible while still meeting power and chum needs.

Hlebechuk said Libby is at elevation 2445.7; the November early-bird forecast for that project is 111% of average. The January 31 Libby elevation target is 2411. Albeni Falls is at elevation 2056.6 and drafting toward 2055; the current forecast shows that it should be possible to reach that elevation by November 15 or 16, despite the recent spike in inflows. Dworshak continues to release minimum outflow and is currently at elevation 1518.7 feet. Inflows to the project are running about 2 Kcfs, currently.

Moving on to fish, Wagner said whatever they're doing, they're doing it without our knowledge. There is no smolt monitoring going on currently, he said; we saw a bit of an uptick in juvenile passage out of the Snake at the end of October. With respect to adults, we're still waiting for the chum to arrive – only about 90 chum have passed Bonneville to date.

Are the late-migrating fall chinook still actively trying to get to the ocean, or are they now hanging out and preparing to overwinter? Turner asked. That's unknown, Wagner replied; those fish tend to move downstream a project at a time, and appear to be about as likely to continue to outmigrate as to call it a season, and remain in the system to outmigrate as yearlings. Wills noted that 263 live fall chinook and 93 fall chinook redds were seen at the Ives Island complex during the most recent spawning ground survey. Kiefer added that a

small number – 7 – of PIT-tagged pre-smolts from some of IDFG’s releases on the Lachsa and other systems have already been detected passing Lower Granite Dam. We’re confident those fish will overwinter somewhere in the system before continuing their outmigration this spring, Kiefer added.

Wellschlager said there is nothing significant to report with respect to the status of the power system; we’ve been doing what we can to prepare for the start of the chum operation, he said.

With respect to water quality, Hlebechuk said the current Dworshak release temperature is just over 45 degrees. Wills said he will discuss the status of the ponding effort at Dworshak National Fish Hatchery and will report back to TMT at a future meeting.

4. Other.

Hlebechuk asked whether all comments have been received on the 2006 Water Management Plan; various TMT participants said they have not yet submitted theirs. Hlebechuk asked that all comments be submitted to her as soon as possible.

Silverberg asked whether the TMT had any additional thoughts on last week’s TMT year-end review meeting. Larry Beck said it is important for the group to remember that most of the information presented was preliminary; there were a lot of caveats attached to most of the presentations. Wellschlager said he would have liked to have had more discussion of the cost-effectiveness of the court-ordered spill operation, which, according to BPA’s estimates, cost ratepayers \$1 million per day. That was a particular concern during the late August period, when very, very few smolts were passing the Lower Snake dams, he said. The spill operation also caused us to spend a shocking period of time exceeding the system reliability limits, Norris added.

5. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team was set for Wednesday, November 23. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.

TMT Participant List November 9, 2005

Name	Affiliation
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Tony Norris	USBR

Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Tim Heizenrater	PPM
Rudd Turner	COE
Larry Beck	COE
Tom Le	PSE
Cindy LeFleur	WDFW
David Wills	USFWS
John Wellschlager	BPA
Russ Kiefer	IDFG
Dan Spear	BPA
Nic Lane	BPA
Kevin Nordt	Mid-Cs
Paul Wagner	NMFS
Russ George	WMCI
Paul Koski	COE
Todd Cook	PPM
Lance Helwig	COE
Matt Rabe	COE
Jim Buck	COE
Jim Van Nest	COE
Shane Scott	PPC
Richelle Beck	D. Rohr & Associates
Bruce MacKay	Consultant
Mike Buchko	Powerex
Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC