

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

December 7, 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.

Review Minutes

No comments were provided on the minutes from the November 23 meeting.

Status of SOR 2005-FWS-3

Greg Hoffman, COE, reported that the original SOR for operations at Libby dam called for early December operations. The COE was not able to get all the gates out due to time and resource constraints, but were able to remove enough to see effects. However, the preferred monitoring of burbot for the study did not occur because only one burbot was observed and it was too small to tag. So, the test became a temperature test, and operators know they can provide temperatures they need with the planned operation. 144 of the 162 gates were removed. The COE will continue to monitor temperature for the rest of the year.

Chum Discussion: SOR 2005-21

Cathy Hlebechuk, COE, requested that TMT consider changing TMT meetings to Thursdays to be able to respond better to SOR's in the future. The salmon managers acknowledged the need for more lead time for operation requests, and offered to give a better heads up when requests are coming and a general overview of what the request will look like. The group may consider switching to Wednesday afternoon meetings.

The USFWS, Nez Perce Tribe, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and CRITFC signed on to SOR 2005-21, requesting an increased tailwater elevation to 13.5' (13.2-13.7') at Bonneville to support chum spawning in the Ives Island complex, if superimposition occurs. The salmon managers would accept the need to drop back to 11.5' if the water ran out, and said that the risk for mortalities with superimposition was enough to risk the need to de-water redds later. It was also noted that it appears that superimposition is not likely to occur this year, but the salmon managers wanted to raise the issue for discussion.

BPA responded that they appreciated the effort by the salmon managers to share the responsibility but noted that in order for BPA to support the operation, Oregon and other salmon managers that were not signed on would need to agree. Also, an immediate increase from 11.5' to 13.5' would be a problem from BPA's perspective.

The question raised was how do you define the April 10 flood control rule curve: Using the March final? The April final? The BOR noted that following the April flood control is uncertain and risky. The salmon managers offered that, during normal or better water years, their recommendation as a concept might be fruitful. The salmon managers understand the recommendation would not likely work during a low water year.

BPA offered support for the concept, and said details of the proposal need work, e.g. specifics for when to lower the tailwater. Also, BPA needs agreement from NOAA and Oregon to move forward, and is willing to work toward details before reaching agreement. SOR 2005-21 states the purpose of the chum flows is to provide the best spawning and incubation conditions possible below Bonneville to protect the natural spawning chum and fall Chinook salmon at the Ives/Pierce Island complex, Multnomah Falls and to partly influence the conditions at the I-205 seeps. The Action Agencies reminded them the Multnomah Falls area is minimally affected and the I-205 area is not affected at all by Bonneville tailwater. Tidal influences are the biggest influence.

Idaho extended appreciation for the group's willingness to talk more, and said there needs to be some change to better protect chum.

Next steps: The combination of a low water year and low numbers of spawning chum make this issue less pressing this year, but all agreed to continue discussions during a process meeting in January.

It was noted that the tribes that signed on to the request have submitted an opposite operation request through the court process.

ACTION: TMT members present agreed to the following operation, which the COE will implement: Unless superimposition occurs between now and the end of the year, the 24 hour operational constraint will be a minimum of 11.5' starting at 00:00 on 1/01/06 consistent with prior years' operations. The FPAC chair will make sure there are no objections from salmon managers that were not in attendance for the discussion.

SOR 2005-22

Russ Keifer, IDFG, thanked the action agencies for giving a heads up that the issue of going to zero nighttime and weekend flow on the Snake River was imminent. After reviewing past notes on the issue, the salmon managers proposed (for the '03-04 winter) a definition for the operation ('few, if any, migrating adults'). This year, the salmon managers used the definition they had proposed and found that, as of today's meeting, adult numbers at Lower Granite were just above the criteria for going to zero nighttime flow, but the numbers were dropping. The salmon managers acknowledged that the numbers were very close to the criteria. The interest the salmon managers have is in providing a more normative river to support migrating adults – zero nighttime flow would not be considered 'normative'.

The COE offered that they are trying to balance biological and energy demands. It appears that the clarity in the definition is based on a number of fish and not on biological criteria. The salmon managers disagreed, saying that the Plan says to go to zero flow when few if any fish are

migrating. So, they tried to design criteria to get at the meaning of this, and develop a number that was biologically based.

The salmon managers expressed a need to get real closure on this issue. For this year, they did not support but would not elevate to IT the action agencies proposal to start the zero nighttime/weekend flow operation on Friday evening, December 9. The COE suggested that there be an experiment to show the biological significance of the operation to help move toward closure on the issue.

ACTION: There will be a single-topic TMT meeting in the near future to discuss development of an experiment, per the COE's suggestion.

ACTION: The COE will implement the following operation: On Friday, December 9, between 2200-0600 hours, operate for up to a six hour period a zero flow at Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite. Ice Harbor will be operated at 65 megawatts during the same time period.

2006 WMP

'Level 3' was added to the Emergency Protocols in the WMP, and NOAA and others would like more discussion on this, at the January 11 TMT meeting. Idaho is waiting to see what occurs with the WMP via the litigation. If it is determined that the WMP will be used, Idaho will share comments. The Fall/Winter update has also been posted on the web and comments are being accepted.

Operations Review

Reservoirs – Grand Coulee was at 1279.4', and holding steady. Hungry Horse inflows were down; the BOR was drafting to meet Columbia Falls, and the elevation was 3539.6'. Libby was at 2439.3' and releasing full powerhouse. The December final water supply at Libby was 106% , so the COE will target 2411' end of December elevation. Dworshak was at 1518.03'; 1458' is the flood control elevation. The December final forecast showed Dworshak at 108%. Albeni Falls was at 2055.3'. There was a good 15.5' tailwater test for chum this year. One final test (at 13.5') was scheduled for 12/8.

Fish –One pinniped was seen at Tanner Creek, a similar occurrence to last year.

Power system – Nothing to report at this time.

Water quality – The Dworshak tailwater temperature was 46.5°, and dropping. There was no report from the hatchery on this.

Other

The Lake Roosevelt Forum is scheduled for April 16-17. The TMT will consider whether to join the forum and hold a business meeting there next year. Also, it was suggested the group might want to go to the Kootenai River/Libby dam/Albeni Falls area for a meeting sometime. TMT will discuss potential field trips at the January 12 TMT meeting.

TMT Meeting Schedule

There is a tentative conference call scheduled for December 21, and a full face to face meeting scheduled for January 12, 2006. January 12 agenda items include:

- Water supply/forecasts
- Review of chum situation
- Litigation update
- WMP Fall/Winter Update
- Adult attraction issues?
- 2005 Transmission issues overview (maybe at the January 25 meeting)

Technical Management Team Meeting Minutes

December 7, 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 503-808-3942.

2. Status of SOR 2005-FWS-3.

Greg Hoffman said the original SOR called for reducing temperatures as much as possible by removing the selective withdrawal gates at Libby Dam. The goal of this SOR was to try to target pre-dam water temperatures during the early part of the burbot migration. We ran into some problems, said Hoffman some of our staff had to go down to Hurricane Katrina, and we lost one of our selective withdrawal cranes. There are 162 gates in the system, and it takes about half an hour each to remove them. We got the majority of them out this year, and you can see the results, in terms of water temperatures, on this graph. We might have been able to come close to the pre-dam temperatures if we had been able to get all of the gates out, Hoffman said.

We had to get Montana's permission for this operation, he continued; one of the caveats of that agreement was that Idaho monitor burbot movement. So far, Idaho has only been able to capture one burbot, which was too small to tag, so this has essentially become a temperature test, which has been successful – we now know we can achieve the temperatures these fish need. In response to a question, Hoffman said the Corps was able to remove 144 of the selective withdrawal gates at Libby; there are still 18 gates remaining.

3. Chum Operations – SOR 2005-21.

I know we've talked about this before, but would it be possible to move the TMT meetings to Thursday? Hlebechuk asked. The problem is the conflict with other Thursday meetings, such as IT and SCT, said Silverberg. It's a real problem to receive these SORs the afternoon before the TMT meeting, Hlebechuk said. Maybe we could consider having the TMT meeting on Wednesday afternoon, Silverberg said. If you could at least let us know you have an SOR coming, the earlier you can give us notice, the better, said Tony Norris. It was agreed that the TMT will consider moving to a Wednesday afternoon meeting in January.

Prior to today's meeting, the action agencies received SOR 2005-21. This SOR, supported by USFWS, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and CRITFC, requests the following specific operations:

- If the salmon managers determine that significant [redd] superimposition is occurring and that the population size of spawning chum at the Ives Island complex warrants additional spawning habitat based on ongoing field monitoring programs, and consideration of other salmon flow needs, beginning on or about December 1 (dependent on in-season field monitoring) increase instantaneous tailwater elevation up to 13.5 feet (range from 13.3-13.7 feet) at Bonneville Dam.
- If tailwater is increased to the 13.3-13.7 range in December, then beginning on or about January 1 (dependent on the cessation of spawning), provide a minimum instantaneous tailwater elevation of 13.0 feet (range 12.8-13.2) at Bonneville.
- Maintain Grand Coulee Dam at Upper Rule Curve elevations throughout the winter and spring, except as needed to achieve the Bonneville tailwater elevation described above, subject to the regular check-ins shown below.
- Check in regularly to review the present operations, the difference between observed flows and those needed to achieve the tailwater elevations determined above, and the probability of being at upper rule curve on April 10, 2006. It is the salmon managers' intention to maximize the probability of achieving spring flow targets by being at upper rule curve on April 10.

David Wills said the main intent of the SOR was to get ahead of the curve and get this issue on the table now. John Wellschlager said it is distressing, to him, that one of the primary agencies responsible for the chum, ODFW, has not signed on as supporting this SOR. Tony Norris noted that the forecasts available at this time are only guesses; he expressed concern that this SOR is relying on an approximation. To increase the tailwater elevation from 11.5 feet to 13.5 feet means an extra 10 Kcfs in flow at Bonneville; over a month, that equates to seven feet of Grand Coulee storage, Norris said.

The group discussed the likely impacts of the requested operation on water depths at the Multnomah Creek spawning area. Norris noted that this operation is essentially the opposite of that requested in the current FCRPS BiOp litigation injunction; I don't understand how CRITFC can support this, he said. We can have our lawyers explain it to you, Kyle Dittmer replied.

The combination of a low water year and low numbers of spawning chum make this issue less pressing this year, but all agreed to continue discussions during a process meeting in January.

It was noted that the tribes that signed on to the request have submitted an opposite operation request through the court process.

TMT members present agreed to the following operation, which the COE will implement: Unless superimposition occurs between now and the end of the

year, the 24 hour operational constraint will be a minimum of 11.5' starting at 00:00 on 1/01/06 consistent with prior years' operations. The FPAC chair will make sure there are no objections from salmon managers that were not in attendance for the discussion

4. SOR 2005-22: Lower Snake Operations.

Prior to today's meeting, the action agencies received SOR 2005-22. This SOR, supported by IDFG, USFWS, ODFW, WDFW, NOAA Fisheries, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and CRITFC, requests the following specific operations:

- The fishery agencies and tribes recommend following the guidelines they developed in 2003 regarding the implementation of zero flow at Snake River projects.

Kiefer said this SOR relates to the fact that the region is now entering the period when the system goes to zero nighttime flow in the Snake. He described the rationale behind this SOR, noting that its intent is to protect migrating adult steelhead. Wellschlager replied that the number of wild steelhead migrants moving through the Snake has now declined to the low double digits, although the number of hatchery adults is higher.

A lengthy discussion of SOR 2005-22 ensued; the action agencies expressed discomfort with the requested operation because of the low fish numbers and the need for additional operational flexibility as the region enters the cold-weather, high-load period. The point is to get the TMT to agreement on criteria that will be implemented as we approach the period when few or no fish are present, Kiefer said.

Wellschlager said that, in his view, fish numbers have now declined to the point that zero nighttime flow can be implemented. If the salmon managers want a couple of extra days, that would be acceptable to Bonneville, but I would like to set a date on which this operation will begin at today's meeting, he said. Unfortunately, I can't speak for Oregon and Washington, and they're not present at today's meeting, said Wills – I'm afraid we can't give you a date at today's meeting.

The group reviewed the adult counts for the last two days (since the SOR was written); it was noted that the trend is continuing downward. The discussion then moved on to the salmon managers' proposed criteria for the start of zero nighttime flow at the Snake projects, which include a three-day average of fewer than 20 wild fish, which has now been met. Kiefer said that, if the action agencies choose to go to zero nighttime flow in the Snake at this time, Idaho does not agree, but will not elevate that issue to the IT.

I don't think we're going to reach agreement on the definition of "few" fish at today's meeting, Hlebechuk observed. She also noted the lack of supporting biological information in the justification for this SOR. Wellschlager said that, in the spirit of cooperation, Bonneville is willing to wait until Friday night to implement this operation. We appreciate that, said Kiefer, and recognize that the action agencies could have implemented this operation a couple of days ago.

Following a caucus break, Kiefer said the salmon managers recognize that it will not be possible to reach agreement on the criteria at today's meeting; while the salmon managers do not support going to zero nighttime flow at this time, they will not elevate their objection to IT. We appreciate the action agencies' willingness to work with us on this issue, Kiefer said. We look forward to sitting down and discussing this topic further at a future TMT meeting, added Wills. It was agreed to schedule a more detailed discussion of the biological side of this issue at a future TMT meeting.

Hlebechuk said that, for up to six hours, from 10 pm to 6 am, Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor may go to zero nighttime flow, starting this Friday night, December 9.

4. 2006 Water Management Plan.

Hlebechuk said comments on the 2006 WMP have now been received from the Fish and Wildlife Service; she asked whether anyone else plans to submit comments. Our only comment was whether or not this is the time to begin discussing level 3 emergency protocols, said Paul Wagner. The salmon managers have spent some time discussing this issue, and our feeling was that some further clarification is needed, particularly with respect to operations at The Dalles, said Wills. Our preference would be to keep this a living document, which we can revisit at a future meet, he said. Kiefer said he has read the WMP and has suggested comments to the policy-level staff at IDFG and at the Governor's office, but because of the ongoing litigation, those comments have not yet been submitted to the Corps.

Hlebechuk noted that the most recent draft of the fall/winter update is also available from the TMT homepage; the Corps is also seeking comments on that document.

5. Current Operations.

Norris said Grand Coulee is now at elevation 1279.4; inflows are picking up, but the project has been drafting to meet chum flows. Hungry Horse has filled slightly in November and December, but inflows have now dropped off again, so Hungry Horse is now drafting to meet the Columbia Falls minimum flow. The current Hungry Horse elevation is 3539.6 feet.

Hlebechuk said Libby is currently at elevation 2439.3 feet and releasing full powerhouse capacity. Libby's December final forecast was 106% of average, which puts its December 15 flood control rule curve elevation at 2411 feet. The December final forecast at Dworshak was for 108% of average; the project is at elevation 1518, currently. Albeni Falls continues to operate in the 2055-foot range. Hlebechuk noted that the chum test, with 13.5-15.5-foot tailwater elevations, went well.

Wellschlager said there are no significant power system issues to report at this time; power prices continue to be high. He added that Bonneville has been able to keep reverse load factoring to a minimum over the past two weeks, because the weather has been dry, for the most part; he noted, however, that once it starts to rain again, that will no longer be possible.

On the water quality front, Jim Adams said the Dworshak release temperature is now about 46 degrees. He added that a Corps report on TDG impacts on aquatic organisms in the estuary is now available; he invited TMT comments.

Norris noted that the 2006 meeting of the Lake Roosevelt Forum has been scheduled for April 6-7; he suggested that the TMT may want to consider holding one of its April meetings at Grand Coulee. Kiefer suggested that it may also be appropriate for the TMT to consider a meeting at Libby Dam some time this spring, to give local residents a chance to discuss their concerns. We'll discuss that at the first January TMT meeting, Silverberg said.

The group briefly discussed when the minimum operating constraint on Bonneville tailwater elevation will be reduced to 11.5 feet; it was agreed to begin this operation on December 31, consistent with prior years' operations, unless there are any objections from the salmon managers not present at today's meeting.

5. Next TMT Meeting Date.

The next Technical Management Team meeting, a conference call, was set for December 21, if needed. The first meeting of the new year was set for January 11. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

TMT Participant List December 7, 2005

Name	Affiliation
Donna Silverberg	Facilitator
John Wellschlager	BPA

Russ Kiefer	IDFG
Tony Norris	USBR
Paul Koskie	COE
Paul Wagner	NMFS
David Wills	USFWS
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Larry Beck	COE
Russ George	WMCI
Robin Harkless	Facilitation Team
Dan Spear	BPA
Nic Lane	BPA
Tim Heizenrater	PPM
Bill Crampton	CBB
Jeff Loughley	COE
John Coffey	Snohomish PUD
Greg Hoffman	COE
Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC
Mike Buchko	Powerex
Bruce MacKay	Consultant
Tom Le	PSE
Brenda Anderson	BPA
Jim Adams	COE