

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM
TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
April 27, 2007 Conference Call

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Robin Harkless

Notes: Erin Halton

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.

4/27/07 CONFERENCE CALL

Spring Creek Hatchery Release

Dave Wills, USFWS, presented SOR 2007-05 on behalf of the salmon managers, noting that this was an attempt to get ahead with an operation to best support the May 1 Spring Creek hatchery release. Mortality rates during the March and April releases were much higher than seen in previous years. The request was based on an operational change made at Bonneville resulting in improvement in survival during the April release: Operating the Powerhouse 2 units with gap closure devices at the low end of 1% efficiency range starting at midnight on May 2 (Tuesday PM/Wednesday AM) and continuing for at least 72 hours or until 95% of the fish have passed the project. In addition, if mortalities reach or exceed 2%, initiate spill to the gas cap. Paul Wagner, NOAA, added that TMT coordination would continue at the May 2 TMT meeting. Dave also reported that coordination had occurred with folks at the juvenile sampling facility, who planned to begin sampling at 4 am on Wednesday, May 2.

Questions were raised about numbers of fish: How many expected to reach Bonneville? What is a minimum sample size for 2% mortalities to initiate spill? How do you know when 95% have passed?

ACTION: The salmon managers will discuss more specific criteria for minimum sample sizes, per request from the COE and BPA. Additional information about fish numbers will be known next week, and the salmon managers planned to coordinate on passage numbers as they have in past years, with coordination at FPAC and feedback through TMT.

There was discussion around the causes of the mortalities, and while nothing is conclusive, the salmon managers did not believe fish density was a factor, and also believed that operating the project as requested would reduce mortalities. It was suggested that a more focused, controlled study should be done to gain more definitive insight as to the cause of the mortalities – the salmon managers agreed that a study should be designed for the future. For this year, the desire was to pass the fish as quickly and safely as possible.

ACTION: The COE responded that they planned to implement specification #1 to the request and operate the unit two gap closure devices to the lower end of 1% for 72 hours beginning May 2. For specification #2, the COE would spill up to 100 kcfs per the 2007 spill operations Agreement. If the salmon managers requested anything outside the scope of the Agreement, the COE would need written consent from all the signatories.

The salmon managers clarified that the intent of presenting the SOR today was primarily to implement the 72-hour operation request and plan to revisit the issue with TMT next week, and if necessary, request further action.

Start of Transportation Operations

Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported that fish numbers at Lower Granite were still low, around 20%, and transportation was still on track to begin May 1. It was clarified that collection for *research* would start April 30, with transportation on May 1. All other transportation operations would start with collection on May 1, and transportation on May 2.

Start of Nighttime Spill at Little Goose

Paul also reported that nighttime spill to the gas cap at Little Goose was slated to begin at 1800 hours on April 29. The current thinking from the salmon managers was that the operation would go for 14 days, but that conditions would continue to be monitored and changes recommended as necessary and available. The gas cap was expected to be around 30 kcfs, as per the current cap, and again, all would continue to monitor conditions as the operation progresses. Jim Adams, COE, added that the gas cap at Lower Monumental would be lowered later today to about 18.7 kcfs, and may need to be dropped further when gas from the additional nighttime spill at Little Goose arrived at the Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor forebays.

Dworshak Operations

Cathy Hlebechuk, COE, shared an update that Dworshak began operating to full load on Wednesday evening and would likely continue until next week's TMT meeting, at which time discussion of the operation will be revisited.

Other

Paul Wagner inquired about John Day spilling less than 60%. Jim Adams responded that the operation was being driven by elevated TDG levels at The Dalles forebay. Adams also said that he anticipated elevated TDG at The Dalles forebay due to warmer climatic conditions resulting in increased temperatures in the river. Don Faulkner stated that the underwater video camera at John Day was not functioning and that the inspections of the fish screens would have to be delayed until the camera was repaired. He asked TMT members whether it would be O.K. to continue operation of the units until the camera was fixed and the screen inspection could be completed. None of the TMT members objected to this request.

Next face-to-face TMT meeting: May 2nd

Agenda items will include:

- Spring Creek Hatchery Release
- Dworshak Operations
- Updated ESP / STP Model Runs
- Snake River Transportation Briefing
- Priest Rapids Update
- Chum Emergence (?)
- Sturgeon Pulse Operations
- WMP Spring/Summer Update – Comments Finalized
- Operations Review

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Conference Call
April 27, 2007**

1. Welcome and Introductions

Today's TMT conference call was chaired by Cathy Hlebechuk and facilitated by Robin Harkless, with representatives from USFWS, NOAA, BPA, COE, BOR, Idaho and Oregon on the line. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made on the call. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should provide them to the TMT chair or bring them to the next meeting.

2. Spring Creek Hatchery Release (SOR #2007-05)

David Wills (USFWS) introduced this SOR on behalf of the Salmon Managers. Based on mortality rates observed for the first two Spring Creek Hatchery releases this year, the SOR attempts to be proactive with the hatchery's last release of the season by asking the Action Agencies to:

1. Operate the units with gap closure devices at the Bonneville Second Powerhouse at the low end of the 1% efficiency range, beginning at one minute past midnight on May 2 and continuing either for 72 hours or until the majority (95%) of the hatchery fish have passed the project.
2. Increase spill from 100 kcfs to the level of the gas cap spill if mortality rates at any time meet or exceed 2% of the release.

Wills noted that 2% mortality is an order of magnitude above what would be considered average for this release. Paul Wagner (NOAA) suggested checking in on conditions Wednesday at the next TMT meeting, when the first part of the operation would be in progress. The crew at the juvenile sampling facility planned to be at their station by 4 a.m. Wednesday, May 2, to begin gathering information. Robyn MacKay (BPA) asked, how many fish will be at the project by 4 a.m.? Normal sampling runs from 7 a.m. one day to the next, so the first few hours will be in addition to the normal run, Wills said. Fish could arrive at the project as early as 7 a.m. on May 2.

Bern Klatte (COE) asked, is there a minimum sample size for making the call that the run is experiencing 2% mortality? What will be the mechanism for determining that 95% of the fish have passed the project? He asked whether that would be coordinated with the COE's Reservoir Control Center; Wills said yes. Since previous releases have had problems, he asked, why are 3.5 million fish being released all at once? There is no perceived benefit to splitting the release, Wills said. Robyn MacKay asked, can we learn anything from previous releases at Bonneville to solve this problem or learn more about it? It would be good to

know whether it's the gap closures or the powerhouse loading that's causing the mortalities. A more controlled study would be in order, but there isn't time for that this year, Wills said. The Salmon Managers' intention with this SOR is to get the fish out to the ocean as soon as possible with the best survival rates that can be achieved. He emphasized that the conditions called for in the SOR are not intended for testing purposes, they are preventive operations based on lessons learned from the previous April release. Mortality rates declined when the turbine flows were reduced.

The COE will adhere to the 2007 agreement, Bernard Klatte said. If 2% mortality triggers a request to spill to the spill cap, and it's over 100 kcfs (the current gas cap at Bonneville), the COE won't spill to that level unless approved in writing by the signatories to the agreement. Klatte cautioned that the gas cap could go lower by the first few days in May. He asked for specifics regarding the sample size that could trigger such a spill request. BPA would not oppose an increase in spill if mortalities are found to be significant, MacKay said. However, BPA views the 2007 agreement as a contract requiring follow-up with the signatories before the COE can act on a spill request over 100 kcfs. Checking in at the next TMT meeting would give us a better idea of the gas cap at the time of the fish passage, Paul Wagner (NOAA) said.

The COE will implement specification #1 in the SOR, Hlebechuk said. This operation will continue for 72 hours, unless the Salmon Managers request that it be extended to allow the majority (95%) of the Spring Creek Hatchery fish to continue to pass the project. As for specification #2, the COE will plan on spilling up to 100 kcfs or the spill cap, whichever is lower. If the request to spill is over 100 kcfs, it will require consent in writing from the signatories to the 2007 agreement. Hlebechuk requested more information on sample size; Wills said he would ask for specifics from the workers at the juvenile facility who will be doing the sampling. Klatte said he would write a draft teletype for USFWS and NOAA to review, depending on the outcome of coordinating the signatories to the 2007 agreement. TMT will address this issue again on May 2.

3. Start of Transportation

May 1 still appears to be the appropriate day to begin transporting fish, Wagner said. Approximately 20% of the Spring Chinook run are gathered at Lower Granite now; the percentage for steelhead is lower than that. These fish will be collected beginning May 1 and transported beginning May 2. There will also be fish collected for research purposes on April 29 and transported May 1.

4. Start of Night Spill to the Gas Cap at Little Goose

At a recent FPAC meeting, the salmon managers agreed to request the start of night spill to the gas cap at Little Goose at 1800 hours beginning the evening of April 29, Wagner said. The operation will continue for 14 days and

must be finished by May 15, so there's not much room to adjust the schedule. The current spill cap at Lower Monumental is 21.4 kcfs, Jim Adams (COE) said. Due to exceedances at Ice Harbor forebay over the past 5 days, the COE has reduced the spill cap at Lower Monumental to 18.7 kcfs. When Little Goose starts spilling to the spill cap during nighttime hours, and the gas reaches the Ice Harbor forebay, the COE will no doubt lower the spill cap at Lower Monumental even further, Adams said. This risk is compounded by the fact that temperatures are getting warmer. The current spill cap at Little Goose is 30.6 kcfs, and spill has been in the 40-60 kcfs range, so there should be a sustained 30 kcfs flow rate all night long, Adams said. Flow rates might stay the same or increase, but are unlikely to decrease.

5. Dworshak Operations

Dworshak went to full load April 26 at 9,800 cfs, Hlebechuk said. This is expected to pass inflows through the end of April. She will email TMT members if there is a change in the current operations.

6. Other – John Day Issues

Wagner asked about the spill cap at John Day. It was 130 cfs on April 20-21, and there were TDG exceedances, Adams said. Therefore the spill cap was reduced to 120, and TDG levels dropped to 119.7% on April 23, then to 118.9% on April 26. The problem with the spill cap at John Day isn't in the tailwater but the forebay at The Dalles, he explained. TDG levels there reached 114.3% on April 26 and have been increasing. The COE has learned there's a range of spill rates at John Day (from around 95 -115 cfs, and especially around 105 -110 cfs) which will almost certainly result in TDG exceedances at The Dalles, despite what the gage downstream shows. So the COE might need to lower the gas cap to 90 cfs or even 85 cfs at John Day.

The video inspection camera at John Day broke in the middle of an inspection, Don Faulkner (COE) said. Workers at the project have requested that inspection of the video camera be delayed for a few weeks until it can be repaired. Wagner said that would probably be fine, and that he would find out for sure on Monday, April 30.

7. Next TMT Meeting

The next meeting will be face to face on May 2, 2007. Agenda items will include Dworshak operations, updated ESP and STP runs, a Snake River transportation update, the Spring Creek Hatchery release, a Priest Rapids update, chum emergence, the sturgeon pulse, the WMP spring/summer update, and the usual operations review. This meeting summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

Name	Affiliation
Rick Kruger	Oregon
David Wills	USFWS
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Robyn MacKay	BPA
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Mary XXX	BOR
Bernard Klatte	COE
Don Faulkner	COE
Jim Adams	COE
Cindy Henriksen	COE
Russ Kiefer	Idaho