

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

December 12, 2007 Meeting

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Robin Gumpert

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.

Official Minutes/Facilitator Notes

The facilitator notes and official meeting minutes from the 11/28 TMT year-end-review and short business meeting were not yet posted; they will be posted on the web for review and the 12/19 TMT conference call agenda will include time for comments and finalizing the notes.

COE Water Management Reorganization

Jim Barton, COE, provided TMT members with a power point presentation of a 'high level overview' of the background, current status and next steps for the COE's Water Management reorganization. He noted that many of the specific details remain to be worked out and that the desire is to have as minimal an impact on key stakeholders as possible. The goal is to increase interdependency and streamline coordination between the Northwest COE Division and District offices. Barton shared a power point and reviewed the general responsibilities for the division and district offices. His presentation was posted as a link to today's agenda on the TMT web page. A concern was raised regarding management of system-wide flood control.

Action/Next Steps: System-wide spill management will be a topic discussed at an internal COE meeting on 12/13. The reorganization is expected to be further developed, tested and refined during Phases I and II from January-October 2008, with a target of completion by October 2008. TMT will continue to receive updates and have opportunity to provide input on the process. This topic will be on a TMT agenda in January 2008.

Chum Operations

Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported that high water conditions on the Willamette and Lower Columbia Rivers since the last TMT meeting had affected the ability to maintain the desired 11.5' tailwater range to support chum spawning. Wagner said necessary steps were taken to allow the excess water to pass and keep flows at a sustained level to the extent possible. Wagner reported that no redds were stranded as observed with the latest chum survey, and that chum were still present in the observation area. Results from the 12/12 survey were not available at the time of this meeting. Wagner offered that those

results would inform whether short pulses to maintain coverage for higher spawning redds would be needed.

BPA clarified that they anticipated being able to maintain a daytime 11.3'-11.7' tailwater range, using reverse load factoring, and reiterated the contingency plan in the event surplus inflows at Bonneville Dam result in an inability to maintain the 11.5' target range. Excess waters would be shaped during nighttime hours (1800-0600 hours). These flows will be shaped in eight hour time blocks with tailwaters up to 13 feet from 1800-0600 hours. If this is insufficient to meet daytime elevation targets, flows will be shaped in four hour time blocks with tailwaters up to 15 feet from 2200-0400 hours. If these higher flows are still unable to meet the daytime target, the project is authorized to pass flows as necessary during the nighttime hours to meet the daytime target. NOAA recommended that if there was a need to move any additional flows during daytime hours, stepping up tailwater elevations by increments of .5', up to a maximum of 12.5' would be acceptable. The salmon managers present at the TMT meeting (USFWS, Idaho) did not object to NOAA's suggestion. They also acknowledged the risk to April 10 Grand Coulee refill if higher protection levels are set and maintained for chum.

Jim Adams, COE, provided an informational report that the B2 corner collector had been opened from 12/7-12/10, to allow debris to pass through the project. TDG levels exceeded 105% (up to 105.6%) for a few hours, but quickly receded without impact to fish.

Action/Next Steps: The operation laid out above will be implemented to support chum for the next week, and this item will be on the agenda at the 12/19 TMT conference call. Paul Wagner offered to share the results of today's spawning survey as soon as possible so that the action agencies could determine whether a pulsing operation would be needed. **UPDATE:** *Following the meeting, Paul Wagner reported that no redds were observed at higher elevations during the 12/12 survey. This information was forwarded to TMT members and other interested parties.*

Snake River Zero Nighttime Generation

Tony Norris, BPA, reported steelhead counts of over 300 on 12/8 and near 200 on 12/9 and so did not propose to allow zero nighttime generation in the Snake River at this point. Video counts will continue through 12/15, with results available around 12/17. Dave Wills, USFWS, suggested that any data available from video counts beyond the anticipated 12/15 end date would help build a historical database, even if results do not influence this year's operation. It was suggested that the video counts should end concurrent with the closing of the fish ladders (this year, on 12/31).

Action/Next Steps: The COE will inquire about continued video count monitoring for this year, and will work to build into future contracts the end date for video counts to coincide with fish ladders closing. TMT will revisit this item at the 12/19 conference call.

Operations Review

Reservoirs – Grand Coulee was at elevation 1285.9' and being held steady to support chum. Hungry Horse was at elevation 3528.9', with outflows at 2.2 kcfs. Libby was at elevation 2424.48' with inflows of .7 kcfs and increased outflows of 19.4 kcfs; an updated runoff forecast of 101% of average means flows will be shaped daily/weekly to reach the end of December elevation target of 2411'. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2055.3' with inflows of 16.7' and outflows at 17.2 kcfs; Dworshak was at elevation 1520.3' with inflows of 1.7 kcfs and outflows of 1.5 kcfs. 7-day average flows at Lower Granite were 25.5 kcfs and at McNary were 126.5 kcfs.

Fish – No report – see chum update.

Power system – No report.

Water quality – No report.

12/19/07 TMT Conference Call:

- Chum Operations
- Snake River Zero Nighttime Generation
- Operations Review
- Scheduling update for 2008 TMT meetings

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Meeting
December 12, 2007**

1. Introduction

Today's TMT meeting was chaired by Jim Adams (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (D.S. Consulting). Representatives from USFWS, NOAA, COE, BPA, BOR, Washington, Idaho and others attended in person or by phone. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at the meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should provide them to the TMT chair or bring them to the next meeting.

2. Review Meeting Minutes

The facilitator's notes and official minutes from the year end review are not yet posted to the website. Notes from the November 21 meeting were posted recently; there were no comments today. TMT will revisit these summaries at its next meeting on December 19.

3. Water Management Reorganization

James Barton (COE) distributed copies of his PowerPoint presentation and explained the process of reorganizing the COE water management function, which began in 2005. Seven COE offices, including those at District and Division levels, manage the Columbia and Missouri rivers. The COE is looking for similarities in management practices, and ways to improve coordination and effectiveness.

Phase 1: The senior management team leading the reorganization has developed guidelines for the process, Barton said. One guideline to increase interoffice coordination is a shift of the responsibility for managing tributaries to local (district) COE offices rather than at the regional (division) level. Overall leadership will continue to come from the Northwest Division office in order to foster a "one door to the Corps" approach for the ease of stakeholders.

Another guideline calls for shifting technical expertise to the technical offices that are at the district level. The district and division offices will work together to coordinate the water management function. A third guideline calls for condensing the roles of three existing branches (power analysis and coordination, hydrological analysis and modeling, and the RCC) into two functions (reservoir control and technical support). This change could ultimately lead to fewer staff at the division level.

Phase 2: Work on Phase 2 of the plan started in September 2007. During this phase, changes to the water management function will be tested in a

simulated environment before real world changes take place. Phase 2 involves a number of technical teams (reservoir regulation, water quality, environmental compliance) working together to figure out how to accomplish this. There will be a number of training sessions and exercises during phase 2. Another major piece of phase 2 is stakeholder involvement. One of the main goals is to minimize impacts on stakeholders.

Phase 3: The implementation phase will run from July-September 2008. It involves preparing detailed transition plans and conducting exercises and testing before the actual changes take place. Many of these tests will be conducted during the coming fish spill season, Adams said.

TMT will continue to be managed at the division level. Anyone who is interested in learning more about the water management process or getting involved in a particular aspect should contact Jim Adams. More details will be available in early January 2008. Barton will make another presentation in January to solicit TMT's involvement as things unfold.

4. Chum Operations

Due to massive rains in early December, this operation was not carried out as described at the TMT year end review on November 28, Paul Wagner (NOAA) reported. The plan was to maintain an 11.5 foot tailwater at Bonneville during the daytime (no heavy rains were expected) and let any excess water out during 8 hour blocks at night. The 11.5 foot daytime tailwater elevation was impossible to maintain during the December storm, so a decision was made by the Corps, BPA, and available TMT members to let nature take its course and keep flows at a sustained level (around 15 foot tailwater elevation) in order to discourage spawning at higher elevations. Excess water was passed at night to the extent possible because mate selection and the initiation of spawning that happen in daylight. *{Supplemental Note: This operation was coordinated with Paul Wagner (NOAA Fisheries), David Wills (USF&WS), and Rick Kruger (ODFW), and Scot Bettin (BPA).}*

Not many chum have been observed in the Ives Island area, Wagner said. On December 10, survey crews found no high-elevation redds in the wake of the storm. The system transitioned back to an 11.5 foot tailwater after the storm ended and has been keeping a pulse every 8 hours to a 13-13.5 foot elevation in order to rewet any redds that might have been established during the high flows.

Tony Norris (BPA) asked if those 13.5 foot pulses could be discontinued during the day. We'll know soon, Wagner replied. TMT tentatively agreed to discontinue them unless new survey information reveals redds at risk. Shortly after today's meeting, Cathy Hlebechuk sent TMT a follow up email, "It was reported by Ken Keller, redd surveyor, to Paul Wagner they did not find any redds at higher elevations today. Therefore, no high pulse is needed."

TMT recommended the COE continue releasing excess flows at night to discourage high elevation spawning. The mid-Columbia reservoirs owned by PUDs are a wild card in planning the chum operation, Norris said. Because Bonneville Dam is at the end of the system, conditions are difficult to control. Russ Kiefer (Idaho) expressed dismay at the lack of coordination with mid Columbia PUDs in order to provide spring outflows that are in the best interests of listed fish. Libby discharges have no effect on chum protection levels, while Grand Coulee outflows do, Norris noted. This winter is following the La Nina weather pattern, meaning more water than usual, Kyle Dittmer said.

The Salmon Managers recommended that the COE continue to operate 11.3 to 11.5 ft during the day as a first priority. If not possible the recommended operation in order of priority was,
Raise the tailwater up to 13 ft for up to 8 hours between 1800 – 0600 hours
Raise the tailwater limit to 15 ft for a 4 hour period 2200 – 0400
Raise the nighttime (1800-0600 hours) tailwater as high as necessary to meet the daytime constraint
Raise the daytime tailwater to 11.8 to 12.2 ft.

5. 2007 Snake River Zero Flow

On December 8, over 300 fish were counted, almost 200 on December 9, Tony Norris (BPA) reported. It's still too early to go to zero nighttime flows.

Prior to today's meeting, Norris and Adams discussed the possibility of extending the contract for video counts at Lower Granite and Little Goose past December 15, the current ending date. Even if the contract could be modified quickly, the results wouldn't be available until after Christmas, Adams said. Then the ladders will be shut down December 31. The possibility of videotaping in 2008 until the ladders are taken out, at Lower Granite is also being investigated, Adams said. It would be worthwhile to continue the video count until the fish ladders are closed this year also if possible, Wills said. That would help to build a historical database. Adams will investigate the possibility of leaving the cameras on now to create a record, waiting to have the counts read until contractual details can be worked out next year. He suggested the Salmon Managers discuss this issue further at FPOM. TMT will revisit it on December 19.

6. Operations Review

a. Reservoirs. Grand Coulee is at 1,285.9 feet elevation and holding steady, supporting the chum operation, John Roache (BOR) reported. Hungry Horse is at 3,528.9 feet elevation with 2.2 kcfs discharges to meet the Columbia Falls minimum.

Libby forebay is at 2,424.48 feet elevation, with inflows of 0.7 kcfs and outflows of 19.4 kcfs, an increase from recent outflows of 9.1 kcfs, Adams said. A new runoff forecast says Libby is currently at 101% of normal outflows. Albeni Falls is 2,055.3 feet at the Hope gage, with 16.7 kcfs inflows and 17.2 kcfs outflows. Dworshak forebay is at elevation 1,520 feet, with inflows of 1.7kcfs and outflows of 1.5 kcfs. The Lower Granite 7 day average is 25.5 kcfs. The McNary 7 day average is 126.5 kcfs.

b. Fish. Wagner addressed this topic earlier today. Computer access was down so he couldn't access the online fish counts.

c. Power. There is nothing to report, Norris said.

d. Water Quality. On December 6, the COE shut off the B2 corner collector and flushed it to remove debris from the Bonneville forebay, Adams reported. As a result, TDG levels at the Warrendale gage briefly exceeded the 105% state water quality standard, then dropped again.

7. Next Meeting

The last TMT meeting in 2007 will be a conference call on December 19 with zero nighttime flows, video counts at Granite, and chum operations on the agenda. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

Name	Affiliation
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Paul Wagner	NOAA
Tina Lundell	COE
Tony Norris	BPA
John Roache	BOR
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