

# **COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM**

## **TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM**

February 13, 2008 Meeting

### **FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS**

Facilitator: Robin Gumpert

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**

Paul Wagner, NOAA, offered a change to the official Meeting Minutes from the 1/16/08 meeting: In the section on Dworshak Lessons Learned, change the word “no” to “little” benefit.

#### **Water Supply Forecast**

Several links were posted to this agenda item that offered forecasts from the COE and Regional Forecast Center. Jim Adams, COE, pointed out the disparities between the two forecasts for Libby (COE: 103% of normal, RFC: 95% of normal) and Dworshak (COE: 102%, RFC: 105%), and noted that the COE would use its own forecasting methodology to manage flood control targets. Given the latest forecast, the Libby end of February flood control elevation was set at 2399.5 feet; and at Dworshak it was set at 1521.8 feet. Paul Wagner recalled from a previous RFC presentation that the reason for the disparity in forecasts is in methodology: The COE inputs real-time precipitation (potentially causing more fluctuations in the forecast as the season progresses) while the RFC inputs future weather trends (this year projected at “normal”). It was also noted that the increase from the January to the current forecast was due to lower runoff in January. TMT also looked at snow conditions in the area and noted the very high snow levels in the Cascades in Washington and Oregon. Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, shared that the ENSO index shows the La Nina, with typical colder temperatures and above normal precipitation, has “peaked” indicating that conditions should return to near normal after spring. Finally, it was reported that The Dalles forecast went up slightly and for April-August is 99% of normal.

#### **Draft 2008 Water Management Plan**

Comments on the latest draft WMP had been received by NOAA and would be posted after today’s meeting – Paul Wagner reported that the changes were aimed at reducing redundancy and making the document more readable. A BiOp status hearing was scheduled for February 20 during which issues potentially affecting the WMP would be discussed. Given this, TMT decided to defer discussion of the WMP until the February 27 meeting.

#### **Spring Creek Operations**

Dave Wills, USFWS, reported that the USFWS evaluation of the 2004 Spring Creek hatchery study returns and other collected data was available for review on the Fish Passage Center website under “Miscellaneous Documents”. A technical group of representatives from USFWS, NOAA, COE and BPA developed a draft set of alternative scenarios for Spring Creek operations that they shared with co-managers for review – as of today’s meeting no proposal had been developed. Any recommended operation will be vetted through TMT – this item will be added as a placeholder on the February 27 TMT agenda.

### **Operations Review**

*Reservoirs:* Libby was at elevation 2406.5’ and targeting 2399.5’ at the end of February. Albeni Falls continued to stay at 2055-2056’, with inflows and outflows both near 15 kcfs. Dworshak elevation was 1521.9’, and with an expected increase in inflows, Jim Adams suggested that outflows might be increased in the later part of February to meet the target elevation by the end of the month. The 7-day average flows were 23 kcfs at Lower Granite, 120 kcfs at McNary and 130 kcfs at Bonneville. Grand Coulee elevation was 1266.8’ and operating to meet power and chum needs, and targeting an April 10 elevation. Hungry Horse was at elevation 3517.31’ with 2.6 kcfs outflows and about 1 kcfs inflows. The Hungry Horse water supply forecast went up from 100% in January to 101% for February (Feb-Jul volume).

*Fish:* Nothing to report at this time.

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

*Water quality:* Nothing to report at this time.

### **Next TMT Meeting, February 27 (note the meeting will be held at the COE):**

Agenda items include:

- Update on February 20 BiOp Status Hearing
- 2008 Draft WMP and Fall/Winter Update
- Spring Creek Operations
- Fish Run Forecasts
- Operations Review

### **TMT March Schedule:**

Based on the majority of TMT’s availability in March, it was determined that TMT meetings will be held on **March 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>**, with a placeholder for conference calls on March 5<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Columbia River Regional Forum  
Technical Management Team Meeting  
February 13, 2008**

***1. Introduction***

Today's TMT meeting was chaired by Jim Adams (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (D.S. Consulting), with representatives of COE, NOAA, BOR, BPA, NPCC, Oregon, Montana, Idaho and others attending 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***

Paul Wagner (NOAA) made a small change to a statement reflected in the official minutes for January 16 under "Lessons Learned from 2007: Dworshak Operations." The minutes currently read "NOAA has found no temperature benefit in providing outflow temperature control on Idaho Power releases at Brownlee Dam." Wagner changed "no" to "little" and explained there is a small benefit to be had in terms of temperature control.

***3. Water Supply Forecasts***

The agenda for today's meeting contains links to all of the forecasts Steve King (RFC) covered in his January 16 briefing to TMT. For comparison purposes, Adams showed TMT the COE and RFC the water supply forecasts for two reservoirs and invited questions about any of the forecasts.

Libby Dam. The COE forecasts 103% of average water supply with an April-August projected runoff volume of 6,493 kaf and an end of February flood control elevation target of 2,399.5 feet. The RFC forecasts only 95% of average flows for Libby. What accounts for the 8% difference? The weather service regression methodology incorporates a trend toward normal, whereas the COE methodology uses real time precipitation data, Wagner and John Roache (BOR) recalled from Steve King's presentation. Adams pointed out that the end-of-month elevation targets are based on COE methodology, and they change when the forecast does.

Dworshak Dam. The COE forecasts 102% of average water supply with an April-July runoff volume of 2,738 kaf and an end of February flood control elevation of 1,521.8 feet. The RFC forecast for Dworshak is 105% of average for the same period. The main reason for the disparity here, Wagner said, is lack of runoff in January. Precipitation has remained on the ground in the form of snow.

The Dalles Dam. The COE and RFC water supply forecasts are about the same, 99% of average.

There was discussion of heavy snowfall this year, large volumes of which have accumulated at lower elevations than usual. These stored water supplies are generally not reflected in the forecasts, Adams said. If there is a warm rain, large runoff volumes could swell rivers. Tony Norris suggested looking at the forecast for Molson Creek in Canada, the headwaters of the Columbia system: flows there were predicted to be way above average. This bodes well for Northwest rivers this year if it comes downstream slowly, Adams said. The multi-variable ENSO index indicates the La Nina trend has probably peaked and will continue into spring or early summer, Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) noted.

#### ***4. Revised Draft 2008 Water Management Plan***

The COE has received comments from NOAA on the latest draft of the WMP, Scott Boyd (COE) said. There will probably be a draft fall/winter update to the WMP available by the next TMT meeting February 27. The group discussed the current dilemma: the WMP is essentially on hold pending the outcome of a status hearing with Judge Redden at 1:30 p.m. February 20, yet the WMP needs to be completed by the time spill season starts on April 3. Because several issues to be discussed at the status hearing could affect water management planning, substantive discussion of the WMP was postponed until the February 27 TMT meeting. In the meantime, NOAA's comments will be linked to the draft WMP that is now available on the TMT website.

#### ***5. Spring Creek Update***

Dave Wills (USFWS) reported that there is no real news since the last meeting because the Salmon Managers are still discussing their options for handling the March 5 release of 7.5 million fish. They could be released all at once or split into two study groups as they were in 2004. Because 4-year-olds from that study are returning this year, we have a more updated evaluation of that experiment, Wills said. The updated evaluation, dated February 1, is posted on the FPC website under Spring Creek, which is accessible via the TMT agenda. TMT will revisit Spring Creek operations at its February 27 meeting.

#### ***6. Operations Review***

**a. Reservoirs.** Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,266.8 feet and operating to meet power demands, maintain the 11.5 foot tailwater elevation for chum spawning below Bonneville Dam, and targeting an April10 elevation for spring flow augmentation. Hungry Horse is at elevation 3,517.31 feet, discharging 2.6 kcfs for Columbia Falls minimums. The inflow forecast at Hungry Horse is 101% of normal for the February-July period, with snowpack currently at 108% of normal.

Libby is at elevation 2,406.5 feet, with a target elevation of 2,399.5 feet at end February. Inflows are running between 1.5-3.5 kcfs. Outflows have been ramped up lately to reach the target end of month elevation. Daily and weekend load shaping is expected to occur. Albeni Falls is still operating between 1,055-2,056 feet at the Hope gage, with inflows of 15 kcfs the past few days. Outflows are averaging 12.9 kcfs as of yesterday.

Dworshak is at elevation 1,521.9 feet, with inflows of 2.4 kcfs and outflows still at the minimum of 1.3 kcfs. Outflows are expected to increase later this month in order to meet the target elevation of 1,521.8 feet by end February. Inflows are generally expected to increase over the next few months, and the end of March target elevation will be adjusted accordingly.

The 7-day average for inflows at Lower Granite is 23 kcfs. The 7-day average for inflows at McNary is 120 kcfs. The 7-day average for inflows at Bonneville is 125-130 kcfs.

**b. Fish.** There was nothing new to report at this meeting.

**c. Power System.** There was nothing new to report at this meeting.

**d. Water Quality.** There was nothing new to report at this meeting.

## ***7. Next Meeting***

The next TMT meeting will be in person on February 27 at the usual location. Agenda topics include a Spring Creek Hatchery update, the outcome of the February 20 status hearing, fish run forecasts for 2008, and discussion of the draft 2008 WMP, possibly including a fall/winter update. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

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