

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

February 27, 2008 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 the official meeting minutes from the 2/13 TMT meeting have been posted to the web. Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, asked that language on page one of the facilitator notes be changed to: "conditions should return to near normal after spring." Dittmer also asked that his affiliation be listed as "CRITFC" in the 1/30 and 2/13 official meeting minutes. The facilitation team and official note taker will make the above changes and the revised notes will be posted on the web.

Draft 2008 Fish Operations Plan

Rudd Turner, COE, reported on the review process for the 2008 Fish Operations Plan (FOP). Comments received from TMT, the Policy Work Group (PWG) and individually submitted comments resulted in the following changes made to the document:

- Language added to clarify low flow operations and initiation of transportation;
- Language added to clarify the data collection, limited flexibility for test schedule, and primary objectives for research operations at Ice Harbor
- Language modified to clarify spill curtailment for barge loading operations at McNary;
- Corrections made to dates referenced in the document.

Turner reported that Judge Redden did not accept proposed changes to the FOP (regarding Libby operations and the use of the Camas/Washougal TDG gauge) that were discussed during a 2/20 hearing; the FOP was signed as a court order on 2/25.

Action/Next Steps: A final version of the FOP, including updated spill patterns for John Day, is expected to be posted to the web early the week of March 3rd.

The FOP will be coordinated into the Fish Passage Plan and Water Management Plan as appropriate.

Bonneville Operation for Spring Creek Hatchery: SOR # 2008-1

Cindy LeFleur, WA, referred TMT members to an SOR linked to the TMT agenda:

the states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho, and the Shoshone Bannock Tribes submitted an SOR to support effective movement of Spring Creek hatchery fish released past Bonneville Dam on or by March 6, 2008.

The COE expressed a desire to work with TMT members to implement other aspects of the request, but stated that, as a policy perspective, the COE will seek to implement the desired results of the SOR without using spill. Similarly, Oregon stated that at the policy level, Oregon supports using spill for this operation. Pros and cons of implementing the spill component of the SOR were discussed during the TMT meeting were as follows:

Pros

- Fish are tagged and test ready for this year.
- The fish released in March are important to United States/Canada, tribal treaty and domestic west coast fisheries.
- Because this hatchery is the only one that produces tule fall Chinook above Bonneville dam, these fish are considered to be the backbone of the northwest fishery and have related cultural and financial values.
- Spill is generally accepted as the safest route for fish passage at the FCRPS facilities and is necessary for maximizing fish passage efficiency.
- This operation would support an important fishery for tribes and states while discussions about reprogramming of the Spring Creek Hatchery are on-going in other forums, including US v. OR.

Cons

- Significant investments have been made to provide proven safe passage via the Bonneville corner collector and bypass system.
- Questions remain about spillway passage survival at Bonneville.
 - The one year test of spillway passage showed ‘not statistically significant results’ that are yet to be peer reviewed.
- Cost to provide the requested spill is around \$3 million. [NOTE: it was clarified during the IT call that the actual cost is between 2-2.5 million.]
- There is an unclear impact on the ability for action agencies to meet the April 10 refill elevation at Grand Coulee.

TMT members were not able to reach consensus and the State of Oregon requested that the question below be considered, from a policy perspective, by IT:

- Should the COE implement the spill component of SOR 2008-1?

Action/Next Steps: An IT conference call was planned for 3 p.m. on Thursday, 2/28. The Salmon Managers planned to discuss options for hatchery releases and issues around specification #7 of the SOR; results of this discussion are expected to be shared with the COE on 2/29.

UPDATE: The IT met and was unable to reach consensus on the spill component of the SOR. Oregon requested that the issue be elevated to the Regional Executive level for discussion and decision, preferably early the week of March 3.

Draft 2008 Water Management Plan

Scott Boyd, COE, reported that comments from NOAA on the draft Water Management Plan had been posted as a link to the TMT web page and would be incorporated into the document. Language from the FOP will also be folded in and the COE expects to finalize the document by early March.

Action/Next Steps: TMT members were asked to submit comments on the draft plan by Friday, 2/29.

Transportation Permit

Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported that as the BiOP is not expected to be finalized until May 6, and potentially after the start of transportation, the existing permit will be extended for one year.

Ocean Indicators Website

Paul Wagner, NOAA, referred TMT to a NOAA website linked to the TMT agenda that illustrates year-to-year comparisons of oceanic conditions associated with stock returns: <http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fed/oeip/a-ecinhome.cfm>. Wagner characterized the outlook for 2008 ocean conditions as good; he encouraged TMT members to refer to the website, as it provides helpful indicators that affect return sizes. TMT members noted the influence of climate change on ocean conditions, as well as the varying degrees of effect on a species during its first, second and third year in the ocean.

Action/Next Steps: Wagner will coordinate a visit from Phil Peterson, NOAA, to discuss the website further at an upcoming TMT meeting.

Adult Return Forecasts:

Cindy LeFleur, WA, referred TMT to Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead forecast spreadsheet linked to the agenda. She noted the following predictions for 2008 returns: 260,000 for Spring Chinook; 52,000 for Summer Chinook; and 75,000 for Sockeye, with 700 of those as Snake River Sockeye. LeFleur clarified the age-based forecasting system and noted that individual forecasts are made for ESA-listed species. She noted that there are unique conditions for fisheries this year (e.g. the 12-day season for sport fishing below the Willamette River.) LeFleur noted the mix of strong and poor return predictions for 2008 and encouraged TMT members to review trends of returns along with the predicted vs. actual statistics.

Operations Review

Reservoirs: Libby was at elevation 2400.4', with inflows of 2.6 kcfs outflows of 9.2 kcfs shaping flows daily/weekly to meet the 2399.5' end of February target. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2055.4', with inflows of 15.5 kcfs and outflows of 16.9 kcfs. Dworshak was at 1521.2' with inflows of 2.5 kcfs, outflows of 1.3 kcfs and operating with a single unit and minimum flows. The 7-day average flows at Lower Granite were 25.8 kcfs; 120.8 kcfs at McNary and 135.7 kcfs at Bonneville. Hungry Horse was at 3514.21', with outflows of 2.8 kcfs. Grand Coulee was at 1258.8, with outflows of 9.6 kcfs. In response to a question, Tony Norris, BPA, clarified that the April 10 flood control target will be

confirmed by the March final forecast and said that BPA has a very high level of confidence that objectives will be met.

Fish: Nothing to report at this time.

Power system: Nothing to report at this time.

Water Quality: Jim Adams, COE, reported that WA TDG regulations have been signed which specifies use of the 12 highest consecutive gauge readings to report daily TDG levels. As per direction from the U.S. Federal District Court, the COE will continue to manage operations according to the highest 12 readings, but will report the 12 highest consecutive readings to WADOE. Both sets of data will be posted as links to the TMT agenda.

3/12/08 TMT Meeting:

Agenda items may include the following:

- Spring Creek Operations
- March Final Water Supply Forecasts
- Operations Review

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Meeting
February 27, 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, BPA, BOR, Washington, CRITFC, Oregon, 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

Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) requested two small changes to previous minutes. (1) In the last paragraph on page 1 of the February 13 facilitator's notes, change "conditions should return to normal by spring" to "conditions should return to normal *after* spring" in relation to the water supply and El Nino. (2) In the February 13 and January 30 official minutes, correct Dittmer's affiliation in the attendance list.

3. Update on Fish Operations Plan Status

After several TMT sessions and a policy work group meeting discussing the Fish Operation Plan, the COE made a few changes. They added a paragraph to the Low Flow Operations section that says initiation of transport will be altered if low flow conditions exist on the Snake River.

The COE also made changes to the Ice Harbor section based on comments from the policy work group and the state of Oregon, Rudd Turner (COE) explained. Commenters said it would be a good idea to get data on two conditions being rolled over at Ice Harbor from 2007. So the COE has set up a study with the Science Center to collect information on passage and survival at Ice Harbor this year under two conditions. Language to this effect has been added to the Fish Operations Plan on page 15. There will be no change to the number of 30% spill days or the number of 45% to spill cap days to aid passage of yearling Chinook and steelhead. The FOP now says the COE will alternate between 45% daytime spill and to the spill cap at night, and 30% spill for 24 hours per day at Ice Harbor, with the RSW following a test schedule similar to that in 2007. There are radiotagged fish available for two test conditions using the single release model, planned for dates similar to those in 2007.

In the McNary section of the FOP, the paragraph on spill curtailment during summer fish barging operations has been modified to allow spill while the

barge is at the dock loading fish There will be a 15-minute spill curtailment for all barges proceeding across the navlock and tailrace to the fish loading facility, and a second 15-minute curtailment while the barge is leaving the dock and moving downstream. Language on page 18 of the FOP has been modified accordingly.

After making some date corrections throughout, the 2008 draft FOP dated February 8 was submitted to the court, along with a proposed order for the judge to sign. A hearing on February 20 elicited two outstanding issues: continued use of the Camas Washougal gage to monitor TDG levels below Bonneville Dam, and Libby operations. In both cases, Judge Redden allowed these operations to continue as they did in 2007.

Regarding the spill operations plan, Russ Kiefer (Idaho) asked about the John Day test schedule. For now, the FOP lists either 30% spill or 40% spill day and night on test days for the spring and summer test, Turner said.

In addition to John Day, there are four projects – Little Goose, Lower Monumental and McNary – that have placeholders in the FOP for updated spill patterns. These will be provided before spill season starts. There were suggestions that in-season changes in spill patterns at these projects be considered via FPOM's changes throughout the year to the Fish Passage Plan, or via the spring/summer update to the Water Management Plan.

There's a desire to use the Regional Forum process and existing documentation as much as possible this year. Turner pointed to Item 3 in the court order, Seasonal Adjustment, which says federal defendants will use existing committees to make in season adjustments as set forth in the 2008 FOP.

4. Bonneville Operations for Spring Creek Hatchery Release – SOR 2008-1

Cindy LeFleur (Washington) presented the SOR. It asks for 100 kcfs spill at Bonneville following the Spring Creek Hatchery release of 7.5 million fish beginning March 5, as well as other operational and powerhouse configurations to aid their passage. To accommodate concerns about high densities of fish hitting the project all at once, two releases of approximately equal size are planned for March 5 and 10. Signatories to the SOR include IDFG, ODFW, WDFW and the Shoshone Bannock Tribes. CRITFC and the Nez Perce Tribe support the SOR but refrained from joining the request.

Jim Adams asked for clarification of items 6 and 7 which appear to be contradictory. Item 6 says operate Powerhouse 2 as first priority; fully load Powerhouse 2 before operating Powerhouse1. Item 7 says operate the turbine units toward the low end of the 1% peak efficiency range. The intent was to make sure all possible turbines and Powerhouse 2 were running before switching to Powerhouse 1, Dave Wills suggested. Operating Powerhouse 2 is a higher priority than operating the turbines at the lower end of the 1% range, Russ Kiefer

suggested. Margaret Filardo (FPC) agreed the request is to keep turbines fully loaded at the low end of 1% efficiency.

Adams asked whether the target is the exact mid point of the 1% range, or near-peak efficiency, something less than the mid point. The COE's recommendation is to operate the units as close as possible to the mid point instead of the lower end of 1%, said COE fish biologist Dennis Schwartz. He suggested using the mid point as a starting place for special operations (low, middle, and high range) for gatewell testing of Spring Creek fish on March 3 and 4 at Bonneville. Data from this operation will be available Wednesday, March 5, to email to TMT to help with decision-making.

In terms of the dual release of fish, Schwartz noted the COE has other research planned on March 10 which would conflict with the second group of fish passing through. That research would have to be postponed until March 17. Schwartz suggested testing the crowding theory with a single release of hatchery fish on March 5.

The signatories hadn't decided whether the SOR is requesting special operations for both releases. The SOR did not request special turbine operations for the second release, Turner said. The COE and the Salmon Managers will touch base again at the end of this week regarding scheduling of fish releases. They agreed a follow-up TMT call is not needed.

Discussion focused on the spill component of the SOR, the only aspect of the SOR that the COE does not support. The rationale for not implementing spill for passing Spring Creek Hatchery fish through Bonneville dam is that spillway passage may not be the safest route for fish, based on results of the 2004 study and other research results, Turner said. After making significant investments in both powerhouses, plus the development of the B2 corner collector and the bypass facility, the bypass system is considered to be the highest survival passage route at Bonneville.

The other Action Agencies and TMT members stated their positions on the spill component of the SOR as follows:

BPA: Hatchery reprogramming, not spill, is the primary solution to the Spring Creek issue. A spill operation would be costly at around \$2 million in lost revenues. Also, study results to date don't show a statistically significant difference in survival rates between the bypass and the spillway.

BOR: The BOR has no official position on this SOR.

NOAA: Generally, spill provides the highest route of survival. However, there have been significant passage improvements at Bonneville to the bypass route. Predation is lower in spring than in summer, when spill is required for safe

passage. The hatchery fish, while highly valued for fisheries enhancement, are not members of a listed species, therefore NOAA doesn't require the Action Agencies to offer the highest route of passage.

USFWS: Reprogramming isn't an entity all its own, but a small part of a larger process that's out of the hands of TMT and individual Action Agencies. It is part of the discussion under *U.S. v. OR* with regard to mitigation at John Day Dam. That issue will not be resolved any time soon, so USFWS currently seeks best practices for hatchery management in the meantime. USFWS wants to see the 2004 test repeated from a technical perspective. While USFWS agrees with what the signatories are asking for in the SOR, a policy level decision was made not to sign it.

Washington: How should the signatories go about getting two more years of study at Bonneville in addition to the 2004 study so questions about the route of safest passage can be answered? Should they submit a proposal for AFEP review? This research would not be funded by the COE under the CRFM program, Schwartz noted. Last year's return of these fish barely made the escapement goal, and they are critical to coastal and ocean fisheries, LeFleur pointed out.

Oregon: The state of Oregon supports this SOR. Because the COE has made a policy level decision not to implement the spill component, Oregon requested that the issue be elevated to IT for further discussion. An emergency meeting was planned for 3 p.m. the following day, Thursday, February 28.

5. 2008 Draft WMP

No changes have been to the Water Management Plan since the Fish Operations Plan became official, Scott Boyd (COE) said. So far, NOAA has been the only commenter. The WMP will need to go through legal review for concurrence with the Fish Operations Plan and should be finalized next week.

6. Transportation Permit

NOAA plans to extend the transportation permit for another year, Wagner said. There is a transportation permit in the new BiOp to be released May 6, 2008. The transportation schedule runs from April 20-May 1, 2008, so the transportation program needs to operate from April 20 until the new BiOp takes effect on May 5. Jim Litchfield (Montana) asked whether the BiOp will extend the incidental take statement. The 2004 Bi Op covers any incidental take associated with research, FCRPS operation or the transportation program, Wagner said. However, not all of this coverage will be extended. Incidental take associated with states' research will be covered under individual permits. Judge Redden's order has extended 2007 operations into 2008, but the incidental take portion of the new Bi Op will not be implemented.

7. Ocean Ecosystem Indicators

The NOAA presenter for this topic was not available today and will join TMT at some point. In the meantime, Wagner referred TMT to the ocean indicators website, which has information on many aspects of ocean conditions such as coastal upwelling, conveyed in accessible terms. A link to this website is attached to today's TMT agenda.

Fish that migrated to the ocean in 2005 faced bad conditions, and last year's returns were poor as a result. Fish that went into the ocean in 2007 encountered good conditions, and there are indications they will this year as well. This represents a new way of forecasting future adult returns, Wagner said. Good Coho returns are expected in 2009 relative to ocean conditions.

There was discussion of the effects of spending 1-4 years in the ocean. Some smolts will be in the ocean spanning years of good and bad conditions, LeFleur said. For Coho and Chinook, the first year is most essential in terms of survival, Wagner said. Much is driven by conditions during the year of entry.

8. Adult Fish Return Forecasts

Cindy LeFleur presented a summary of the 2008 spring and summer Chinook forecast. The prediction for upriver spring Chinook is 269,000, a very good return and the third highest since 1977. That prediction includes 21,000 Snake River wild ESA fish. It will include some 4-year-old fish and some 5-year-olds. The summer Chinook run is expected to be around 52,000. Sockeye are predicted to be 75,000, also high. Predictions show fall runs are in better shape than last year, but not great. Certain stocks are having trouble, such as the Lewis River fall Chinook and Coho runs.

Operations Review

a. Reservoirs. Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,258.8 feet, discharging outflows of 96.6 kcfs. There was discussion of planning to meet the April 10 flood control elevation of 1,255 feet *{Additional clarification by Mary Mellema: This April 10 flood control elevation is based on the February 1 forecast and no shift from Dworshak}*. The reservoir is well above the lower limits to draft for the end of February target and expect to meet the end of March target elevation as well, Tony Norris (BPA) said. There is a high level of confidence these objectives will be met even if the water supply forecast goes down.

Hungry Horse is at elevation 3,514.21 feet, with discharges of 2,844 kcfs to support the Columbia Falls minimum flow.

Libby is at elevation 2,404 feet, with inflows of 2.6 kcfs and outflows of 9.2 kcfs. Flows are being shaped both daily and weekly, ramping down to meet the end of February elevation target of 2,399.5 feet.

Albeni Falls is at elevation 2,055.4 feet, with inflows of 15.5 kcfs and outflows of 16.9 kcfs, still operating within a 1-foot range of 2,055-2,056 feet elevation.

Dworshak is at elevation 1,521.2 feet, with inflows of 2.5 kcfs and outflows of 1.3 kcfs. Operations have gone back to a single unit at the low end of efficiency and minimum flows.

The 7-day average for inflows at Lower Granite is 25.8 kcfs. The 7-day average for inflows at McNary is 120.8 kcfs. The 7-day average for inflows at Bonneville is 135.7 kcfs.

b. Fish. There was nothing to report at this meeting except that a very few fish have passed.

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

d. Water Quality. Washington State's new water quality regulations have gone into effect, calling for daily TDG levels to be reported as the high 12-hour consecutive average. Because the Fish Operations Plan is a rollover of last year's operations, the COE will manage to the high 12-hour average, but will include in its end-year report a high consecutive 12-hour average for the state of Washington, Adams said. The method of calculating the high consecutive 12-hour average hasn't yet been determined.

7. Next Meeting

The next regular TMT meetings will be on March 12 and 26. The March 12 meeting will focus largely on Spring Creek Hatchery operations. This summary prepared by Pat Vivian.

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Laura Hamilton	COE
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Cindy LeFleur	Washington
Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC
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