

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

November 12, 2008 Conference Call

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.

Chum Operations Plan

An unscheduled TMT conference call was convened to discuss short term chum operations as follow up from the November 7 call. Tony Norris, BPA, reported that while there was a contingency plan in place to manage excess water into the system, the Action Agencies were able to maintain the target operation of 11.3-11.7 tailwater elevation at Bonneville through today. That said, there was still a need to keep a contingency plan in place for the short term.

Paul Wagner, NOAA, suggested that increasing chum populations would increase impact risks from any deviation in target operations, and as such, proposed the contingency plan be refined. He recommended removing the steps that described increasing the tailwater elevation target during daytime hours as needed and then returning to the 11.5 foot target elevation when the increase was no longer necessary, as this could negatively impact chum redds. Given that the Action Agencies needed to have 'cover' for daytime hours as needed to manage the excess water, a suggestion was made to change language so that *if* the target elevation were to go up for longer than a couple hours, it would remain there for the rest of the spawning and incubation period. Longer term operations would need to be discussed if the latter were implemented, as it would impact refill and other system needs later in the spring. In addition, the steps would be re-ordered so that short term (two to three hour) pulses at a higher elevation late in the afternoon/early evening would be implemented before moving to a higher target elevation.

TMT members that participated on the call agreed to the short term contingency plan as was discussed, and wanted to review the language in writing before finalizing in the teletype.

Action: Dan Feil, COE, was tasked to revise the teletype with language discussed today for short term contingency operations. He emailed it to TMT members following today's conference call, and comments were to be shared through Paul Wagner and back to Dan for finalizing later today. The teletype was to go out at the end of today, November 12, or tomorrow morning, November 13. TMT will revisit chum operations during their face to face meeting on November 19.

Next Meeting: 11/19 **Please note that the meeting will be held from 1-4 p.m.

Action items include:

- Albeni Falls – Historical Data / Post-spawning Operations
- Chum Operations
- WMP – Edits Review
- Operations Review

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1. Introduction

Today's TMT call was chaired by Jim Adams (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (DS Consulting) with representatives of BPA, COE, NOAA, USFWS, BOR, CRITFC, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and others participating. 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. Chum Flow Management

Tony Norris (BPA) led today's discussion in the ongoing process of managing Bonneville tailwater elevations for chum spawning while operating within constraints posed by spill wall construction upstream at The Dalles Dam. Last Friday, Nov. 7, TMT held an unscheduled call to discuss short term contingency plans for Bonneville operations in light of possible increased flows. That discussion led to a tiered approach in which various steps would be taken to manage any excess flows before moving to the next level. On Monday, Nov. 10, a teletype was sent out to project operators based on Friday's discussion.

Today's meeting was focused on contingency plans for managing chum operations over the next week until TMT's next regular meeting on Nov. 19. Operations so far have gone very well, Wagner observed; the original hard elevation constraint of 11.3-11.7 feet in the Bonneville tailwater has been consistently maintained day and night. This has been due mainly to good luck in terms of precipitation moving north, Tony Norris (BPA) cautioned. The next few days could still bring problems. A graphic posted to today's agenda shows Bonneville tailwater elevations and discharges from the beginning of chum operations on Nov. 7 until early this morning.

In reviewing the teletype that went out Nov. 10, Paul Wagner (NOAA) expressed discomfort with moving forward under the range of options it allowed for reasons that made sense at the time. It was the first week of chum spawning season and not many chum were expected in the Bonneville area, so the risk to the run was relatively low. Chum status changes daily, and potentially more fish could be impacted at present. On Nov 10, 30 chum and 9 redds were counted at Ives Island, Cindy LeFleur (Washington) reported. Wagner expressed discomfort moving forward with the flexibility provided in sections 5, 6 and 7, which could increase the tailwater elevation to a broader range, then allow the elevation to return to the low end of that range during the height of spawning.

The Action Agencies need guidance for managing any excess flows that arise during the day, so deleting sections 5, 6 or 7 wasn't an option. As a short term contingency plan, Norris suggested the language of the teletype be modified to say that increased ranges of 11.3-12.3 feet or 11.5-12.5 feet elevation would become the new hard constraint if they are invoked. Wagner agreed that would be his preference.

There was discussion of whether a short-term increase in the tailwater elevation range of, say, 2 hours would make it the new hard constraint. Two hours could be acceptable or undesirable depending on conditions at the time, particularly if it happens in the afternoon, Wagner said. There was discussion of section 7, which allows the tailwater elevation to rise to 15 feet for 3 hours in the afternoon from 3-6 pm. Section 7 will be revised to say that tailwater elevations will return to 11.3-11.7 feet if river conditions allow. Factor in the current rate of tailwater elevation change per hour to determine whether that's possible in the allotted time, Scott Bettin (BPA) said. The expectation is that the tailwater elevation would return to the specified range by next morning.

The teletype will be revised so that what is now section 7 precedes sections 5 and 6, which then become the new sections 6 and 7, incorporating modifications discussed today. The new sections 6 and 7 will say the elevation range could increase without specifying a particular target, and the new section 5 will be modified so that the target elevation is 15 feet, not 12.

Feil summed up the new priorities as follows: If excess flows can't be released at night, the next step would be a spike in the late afternoon, followed by a return to existing elevation criteria. If that doesn't work, the next step would be to raise the tailwater elevation as a hard constraint for the entire daytime period. At that point TMT would reconvene to decide whether spawning should be allowed to occur at the higher elevation, given the operational difficulties that could pose later on.

USFWS, Idaho and Washington did not object to this operation and expressed willingness to defer to NOAA on this issue. The COE will send the revised teletype this afternoon to NOAA and copy all TMT members, with the goal of sending the teletype out to project operators by tonight or early tomorrow. Washington and BPA will confer regarding current chum population and redd counts. And the COE will incorporate the latest chum flow management strategy (as stated in the new teletype) into the draft Water Management Plan fall/winter update for review at the next TMT meeting.

5. Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled TMT meeting will be at 1 pm, Nov. 19, 2008, location to be advised. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

Name	Affiliation
Jim Adams	COE
Tony Norris	BPA
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Dave Wills	USFWS
John Roache	BOR
Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC
XX	Seattle City Light
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Scott Bettin	BPA
Kevin Grode	COE
Rick Kruger	Oregon
Cindy LeFleur	Washington
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Dan Feil	COE