

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

December 17, 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.

Review of Minutes/Agenda

The 11/19 and 12/3 facilitator notes and official meeting minutes were posted to the TMT webpage. TMT members discussed minor edits and both sets of notes were considered final. The 11/21 Year End Review facilitator notes and Official Minutes were posted to the web and TMT will look to finalize them at the 1/14/09 meeting.

Chum Operations

Dan Feil, COE, referred TMT to chum operations summary and graph links posted to the agenda; he noted that operations stayed within the targeted 11.3-11.7' tailwater range during daytime hours this week, with some increases at night as specified in the COE's current (12/16) teletype. Feil said that BPA and NOAA provided edits to the teletype and that the current version has condensed language (fewer steps) than in previous versions, with no overall substantive changes per discussion on the 12/15 TMT conference call.

Tony Norris, BPA, reported that surveyors counted 7 “carry over” (not new) fish on 12/16 and asked the Salmon Managers for guidance on declaring the end of spawning. TMT members referred to historical data from the Fish Passage Center (FPC) website, which showed that over the last few years, the end of spawning has typically been declared around the 21st of December. This prompted TMT members to suggest chum operations consideration via email early next week 12/22, when new survey data may be available.

Action/Next Steps: Chum Operations will continue as specified in the current teletype for the short term and TMT will review data and consider the end of chum spawning operations via email next week. FPAC plans to discuss chum operations and the unique actual conditions of this year at an upcoming meeting.

Albeni Falls Operations Update

Ken Brettmann, COE, reported that Albeni Falls continues to operate within its elevation target range of 2051-2051.5' and will continue to do so until the end of Kokanee spawning is declared or 12/31, whichever is sooner. Russ Kiefer, ID, reported that a survey was planned for 12/19 and there will be a joint IDFG/USFWS/COE/BPA conference call on 12/22. Kiefer referred TMT to graphs linked to the agenda that showed IDFG trawling data from 1986-2008. Kiefer noted that the data show some

evidence of abundance improvements for the efforts made toward providing good spawning conditions and suppressing non-native predators. He added thanks to the Action Agencies for their coordination and response efforts. Kiefer acknowledged the regional desire for elevation flexibility at Lake Pend Oreille this winter and as such, said IDFG would likely not require a full week with no observed spawning to pass before declaring the end of spawning and allowing for flexibility. Regarding post-spawning operations, Kiefer reported that IDFG has studies planned for the post-spawning season and informally requested a 1' (2051-2052') operating range through March. Brettmann agreed to the informal request and to continue to coordinate operations informally through TMT meetings/calls through the early spring season.

Action/Next Steps: The project will continue to operate within a .5' range until IDFG, per the latest surveys and in consultation with other regional partners, declares the end of spawning. IDFG will notify the Action Agencies immediately when they observe evidence of the end of spawning. Jim Adams, COE, planned to send Kiefer a comprehensive email contact list to support regional coordination.

Snake River Zero Nighttime Generation

Tony Norris, BPA, referred TMT to updated graphs on zero generation data posted as a link to today's agenda. Also posted to the 12/3 TMT meeting agenda was the end of passage criteria language used by the Salmon Managers in SOR #2005-22. The Salmon Managers reviewed the best available data at the 12/16 FPAC meeting and had no objection to granting the Action Agencies zero generation flexibility.

2009 Draft Water Management Plan

Dan Feil, COE, reported he would email TMT members when the revised version of the 2009 Water Management Plan was posted. A word version of the Fall/Winter Update to the WMP was also posted to the webpage. Feil added that the COE is looking to make the TMT website more user friendly and welcomed suggestions from TMT members. The COE will let TMT know when they are actively revising the website, to help focus the timing of suggestions/comments.

Action/Next Steps: TMT will review the revised version of the WMP when it becomes available and the document will be finalized by the end of the year. TMT members may send their comments on the Fall/Winter Update directly to Feil for posting. Feil noted that he will also email TMT members when the 2009 Fish Passage (FPP) and Fish Operations Plans (FOP) are posted; an FPOM meeting to discuss the FPP is scheduled for 1/8/2009 at NOAA.

Operations Review

Reservoirs: Grand Coulee was at elevation 1283', and Hungry Horse was at elevation 3526.94', with outflows of 3 kcfs. Albeni Falls was at 2051.08', with inflows of 10 kcfs (down from the 15-18 kcfs range in previous days.) Dworshak was at 1529.5', with outflows of 1.6 kcfs. Seven day average inflows were 20 kcfs at Lower Granite, 121 kcfs at McNary and 129 kcfs at Bonneville.

Libby was at elevation 2421.7', with inflows ranging from 1-2 kcfs and outflows in the range of 22-24 kcfs; the end of December elevation target for the project is 2411'. The

COE clarified for the Salmon Managers that they used volume of water criteria, rather than water supply forecast percentages, to determine the end of the month target. This language was taken from policy guidance included in the 2004 Variable Control document attached to today's agenda. Language to this effect had not yet been included in the 2009 WMP, but the action agencies intended to make the change. Ken Brettmann, COE, also said that there would not likely be any flexibility around the flood control target. Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, noted that this month's precipitation is about 65% of normal and CRITFC would support flexibility around the target.

Action: In the future, the Action Agencies will be clear with the Salmon Managers and others about guidance being used to determine flood control elevation targets – and document it in the appropriate guidance documents.

Fish: Nothing other than chum to report at this time; Russ Kiefer noted that he saw aerial photos of Fall Chinook redds in the Clearwater that looked to bring good news ahead.

Power System: December 15 and 16 set new records for peak loads in the northwest.

Water Quality: Nothing to report at this time.

Other: Jim Adams reported that Kevin Grode's last day at the NW Division office will be Friday, December 19; the position of RCC Chief will be filled by a 120-day interim followed by a permanent position. Cathy Hlebechuk may serve as the interim chief. The COE will update TMT as the position gets filled. Also, Lance Helwig will be leaving his post as Project Manager for The Dalles spillwall installation and serve as the new chief of design at the COE Portland District office.

Next face-to-face TMT Meeting: 1/14 (Note: a TMT conference call may be convened between now and then)

Agenda items will include:

- Chum Operations
- AFEP Highlights
- The Dalles Spillwall Update
- Water Supply Forecasts/Flood Control
- Fish Operations Plan
- WMP Final – Highlights
- Operations Review

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Meeting
Dec. 17, 2008**

1. Introduction

Today's TMT meeting was chaired by Jim Adams (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (DS Consulting) with representatives of COE, Idaho, USFWS, NOAA, BPA, CRITFC, 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. Review Meeting Minutes

All of the facilitators' and official notes for recent TMT meetings have been posted on the website except those for the TMT year end review on Nov. 21 and the Dec. 15 conference call.

Russ Kiefer (Idaho) noted that IDFG fishery technicians count adult kokanee spawners, not redds, as reported in the Nov. 19 notes under Albeni Falls operations. The count was 959 so far this year, as compared to 325 last year. This comment was already been submitted to the COE and the notes revised accordingly, Adams replied. In the Nov. 19 official minutes on page 4 under chum operations, Paul Wagner (NOAA) said the FPC reported chum, it didn't count them.

3. Chum Operations Update

The first two links to this item on today's agenda show Bonneville discharges vs. tailwater elevations for the weeks of Dec. 3-10 and Dec. 10-17, respectively. The effort to move excess water out at night in order to maintain tailwater elevations within the chum operation constraints has been largely successful, with a slight peak in discharges on Dec. 14 in response to the recent cold weather load demands, Dan Feil (COE) said. So far, BPA has not had to tap into the flexibility provided in the Dec. 15 TMT call, Tony Norris said. In the near future, discharges might increase as early as 1500 hours, but that will be delayed as long as possible.

The third link to this item on today's agenda is the current operations teletype, discussed during the Dec. 15 call. It's essentially the same as the previous teletype emailed to TMT except the directions are more succinct, and the time for beginning higher night flows has been moved back from 1800 hours to 1500 hours (from 3 to 2 pm).

The chum operation will proceed as follows. First, flows will ramp up at night from 1500 to 0600 hours up to an 18.5-foot tailwater elevation below Bonneville Dam. If that's not sufficient to pass excess water, outflows will be ramped up during the day to a maximum of 12.5 feet. So far, the nighttime flows have accomplished the balance between chum protection and power demands, and daytime flows have remained within the 11.3-11.7-foot tailwater elevation range. Conditions are uniquely dry this year, creating relatively flat flows for chum, Norris added. At its year end review, FPAC will examine the generally held assumption that flat flows benefit chum, Wagner said.

Meanwhile, survey crews reported 7 live chum spawners in the area, suggesting that the end of spawning could be declared soon, possibly via a stakeholder call on Monday, Dec. 22. Wagner consulted FPC online data, which showed chum spawning tends to end sometime next week, possibly later. TMT agreed to communicate via email if the end of chum spawning is declared early next week. When spawning ends, there will be a minimum tailwater elevation but no maximum. NOAA and CRITFC agreed to this operation.

4. Albeni Falls Operations

Ken Brettmann (COE Seattle) gave an update. The COE has been operating Lake Pend Oreille for kokanee spawning under the October 7 SOR jointly signed by USFWS and IDFG. The COE plans to keep the lake elevation within a half foot band, between 2051-2051.5 feet elevation, until the end of kokanee spawning or Dec. 31, whichever comes first. Russ Kiefer (Idaho) presented data, linked to this item on today's agenda, showing numbers of age-2, 3 and 4 kokanee spawners from 1977 to now. A bump in age-2 spawners in 2008 suggests a possible resurgence in the kokanee population.

There was discussion of how to handle the end of kokanee spawning, particularly if it is declared on Christmas Day. Last week, IDFG researchers counted over 100 live adults in spawning areas, Kiefer reported. There will be another count Friday, Dec. 19. Kiefer suggested coordinating offline on Monday, Dec. 22, to coordinate the potential end of spawning. Idaho will not wait for a week of no fish before notifying the COE that spawning is over, Kiefer said.

Discussion moved to post-spawning operations. Kiefer asked whether an SOR would be needed to declare the end of spawning; Brettmann said no. While there has been talk of adding flexibility to the typical 1-foot operating band at Lake Pend Oreille, this year the COE intends to maintain the elevation of the lake between 2051-2052 feet from the end of spawning until the end of March. This is consistent with operations in recent years, with the exception of heavy rain events that cause the lake elevation to rise above typical levels. At present, there are too many unanswered questions to introduce flexibility into this year's winter operation, Brettmann said. Stakeholder discussions will continue with regard to operations in future years.

5. Snake River Zero-Generation Nighttime Flow

In a previous discussion, the Salmon Managers noted a running 3-day average of 65 total steelhead and 20 wild steelhead as the criteria for implementing the water control manual, Norris reported. This information is posted on the TMT agenda for Nov. 19, 2008. These criteria have been met (actual counts are 64 and 19, respectively), so BPA suggested the COE modify its teletypes accordingly, noting that BPA will not need the flexibility any time soon in light of current power demands round the clock. Yesterday's FPAC discussion reached the same conclusion: the criteria for "few adults migrating" as stated in the BiOp have been satisfied, Kiefer said. The COE will revise its teletype instructions to project operators accordingly.

6. WMP and FPP Updates

The updated WMP draft with comments to date is very close to being published on the TMT website, but still needs minor edits and legal review, Feil said. Most of the comments have been incorporated, with the intent to finalize the 2009 WMP core document (not a seasonal update) by Jan. 1. A draft fall/winter update is available on the TMT website.

The Fish Passage Plan will be available via the TMT website later this week, Feil said. A special FPOM meeting is scheduled for Jan. 8, 2009, to review FPP provisions in detail. The FPP now resides on its own website (linked to the TMT page) which is being revamped to make it more user-friendly. Comments on the webpage from TMT members would be welcome, Feil said.

7. Operations Review

a. Reservoirs. Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,283 feet, operating to support chum spawning below Bonneville and winter power generation. Hungry Horse is at 3,526.94 feet elevation, discharging 3 kcfs.

Albeni Falls is at elevation 2,051.08 feet; inflows dropped to 20 kcfs on Dec. 16. It will continue to be operated within the half-foot elevation range until kokanee spawning ends; then operations will shift to a 1-foot elevation range of 2,051-2,052 feet.

Dworshak is at elevation 1,529.5 feet, passing minimum discharges of 1.6 kcfs until the end of January. Inflows have fluctuated between 0.8 and 3.1 kcfs over the past 5 days.

The 7-day average at Lower Granite is 20 kcfs; at McNary, 121 kcfs; at Bonneville, 129 kcfs.

Libby is at elevation 2,421.7 feet. Inflows, now 1-2 kcfs, have dropped considerably and outflows are ranging from 22-24 kcfs using 5 units through tomorrow. There was extended discussion of the COE's methodology for calculating the end of December Libby flood control elevation of 2,411 feet, which surprised both NOAA and USFWS because it conflicted with provisions of the WMP. The COE posted on today's agenda a report examining the Dec. 31 variable flood control draft for Libby reservoir, Adams pointed out. The WMP had stated that there's a variable draft methodology in place for operating Libby reservoir, which says that if the November/December SOI forecast is less than 95% of normal, a sliding scale methodology would be used to calculate the flood control elevation between 95% and 88 % of normal the reservoir would be drafted to elevation 2,413.2 feet by the end of December given this year's 94% of normal precipitation forecast, Wagner said. The WMP for the past 3 years has suggested that a less than 95% of normal precipitation would invoke this sliding scale methodology for flood control. NOAA and USFWS asked the COE to explain the discrepancy between the Corps planned operation and the WMP.

Joel Fenolio (COE Seattle) directed TMT to the 2009 WMP, page 42, and section 4.4.3 on flood control, which addresses Libby flood control operations in terms of the actual inflow volumes needed to determine draft volumes, not as a percentage of average. In section 4.4.3, all volumes of 95% of average or more have been changed to 5,900 kaf, and all volumes of 88% or less have been changed to 5,500 kaf or less. The confusion of volumes and percentages can be traced to a recently discovered error in the WMP, which for several years cited 95% of average as a criterion for altering Libby flood control operations. In general, flood control curves and computations are based on volumes, not percentages of normal. Kiefer suggested a heads-up to TMT members whenever a discrepancy like this is discovered, so nobody wastes time scratching their heads over it. Wills asked whether the WMP specifies an average storage volume. It's 6,248 kaf, Norris replied, noting that flood control is based on operation of the whole system, not the history of a particular gage.

Wills asked whether there's any flexibility to allow flood control draft requirements to be relaxed, given that the forecasted volume of 5,937 kaf is close to the breakpoint of 5,900 kaf; Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) seconded this request for flexibility because once the water's gone, it's gone. Flexibility isn't an option now because it's too early in the season to relax VARQ flood control curves, with possible winter storms coming, Fenolio replied. There was agreement that the WMP should have specified the percentage of normal for the April-August volume forecast as 94% not 95%, although it should not have been expressed as a percentage. The WMP will be revised to include the April-August inflow volumes that determine the flood control draft targets rather than the percent of average currently in the WMP.

b. Fish. There was nothing to report today.

c. Power System. There were no problems to report today. Monday, Dec. 15, brought a record peak load of over 61,000 MW in the Northwest, and this record was broken the very next day, Norris reported.

d. Water Quality. There was nothing to report today.

9. Next Meeting

TMT scheduled a tentative conference call for Jan. 7, 2009. The next regular TMT meeting will be Jan. 14, with highlights from the recent AFEP review, water supply forecast information, a review of flood control operations, an update on construction of The Dalles spill wall, a FOP discussion, finalizing the WMP, and the standard operations review on the agenda. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

Name	Affiliation
Jim Adams	COE
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
David Wills	USFWS
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Tony Norris	BPA
Dan Feil	COE
Bob Diaz	Renewables

Phone:

Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC
Ruth Burris	PGE
Richelle Beck	DRA
Barry Espensen	CBB
Ken Brettmann	COE Seattle
Dan Spear	BPA
Russ George	WMC
Tom Le	Puget Sound Energy
Jason Flory	USFWS Spokane
John Roache	BOR
Joel Fenolio	COE Seat