

## COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

### TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

May 22, 2009 Conference Call

#### 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.

#### **Debris Issue at Lower Granite**

Russ Kiefer, ID, referred to an email sent out earlier in the day about regarding debris collecting on the screens at Lower Granite. Kiefer said he appreciated the COE personnel at the project who helped alert the region to this issue and noted that for steelhead, it would be much better to transport than collect. He suggested increased spill would improve passage at Lower Granite and would also move more water to the spillway rather than the powerhouse. Kiefer said that after conferring with his co-managers, the official request from IDFG is to shift spill up to 120%.

Dan Feil, COE, referred TMT to an email sent by John Bailey, Project Operator at Lower Granite, which provided detail on the debris issue at the project. Feil noted that 700 fatalities have been observed today. He also clarified that no PIT tag data will be available during bypass, as the screen that is having debris issues is downstream of the primary bypass. At the time of the call, the project had outflows of 140 kcfs and was spilling 32.5 kcfs. Feil said that a 122% gas cap level is equitable to about 40 kcfs; he clarified that the gas cap is per the new Spill Priority List. Kiefer recalled that two days ago the project spilled at higher level and levels were still were under 110%; he estimated the COE could bring spill up to 50 kcfs and still not go over 120%.

Ritchie Graves, NOAA, asked the COE if they would be amenable to spilling up to 120%. (He also clarified that the current minimum requirement at Lower Granite per the 2008 BiOp is 20 kcfs.) Tom Lorz, CRITFC, acknowledged the difficulty in estimating the level of benefit, but the decision being made today is one that will be based on the best professional judgment of those in the region. Dave Statler, Nez Perce Tribe, acknowledged that two or three days ago the Clearwater had elevated flows but levels have since subsided and the debris will likely subside within the next day or two. The COE answered NOAA's question by stating they were indeed amenable to spilling up to 120%.

**Action:** The COE planned to implement an operation that would bring spill up to the 120% cap. Feil planned to send this out to TMT in a teletype and will follow up with email updates as the next few days unfold.

- ID suggested the COE review a report that refers to PIT tag data that indicates that spillway passage is better than bypass passage and to be mindful that this is the peak migration of the most endangered fish on the Snake River - the Sockeye.

Feil said the COE will be sure to pass on all data (including effects on lamprey and any effects to passage at downstream projects) gleaned from this unexpected event and stated that the COE will do the best they can to manage this issue.

**Next TMT Meeting: May 27<sup>th</sup> Face to Face**

Agenda items include:

- Review Notes
- Follow up on Debris issue at Lower Granite
- Transmission Emergency Action Plan / Comments
- Lower Snake Augmentation Update
- Spill Priority List
- Summer Operations / Draft Summer Fish Operations Plan
- Operations Review

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Technical Management Team Conference Call  
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***1. Introduction***

Today's TMT call was chaired by Dan Feil (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (DS Consulting), with representatives of CRITFC, NOAA, Oregon, COE, Idaho, Nez Perce Tribe, BPA, USFWS, 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. Debris in Bypass at Lower Granite Dam***

Today's unscheduled call was requested by Russ Kiefer (Idaho) to address problems with debris accumulation at the primary dewaterer of the Lower Granite bypass facility. The first watering screen in the bypass facility has been shut down and the transport operation suspended due to heavy clogging with fine debris, pine needles, etc. While project staff report that it is typical to see large woody debris when flows are 150 kcfs or higher, this type of debris accumulation has not been seen before.

To date, 700 salmonid mortalities have been counted as a result of the debris. Now that the project is in primary bypass mode, the mortalities have generally stopped, Feil assured everyone. However, all were aware that lower adult returns can be expected for fish that are bypassed now instead of being transported at Lower Granite. The source of the debris appears to be the Clearwater River, where there were record-setting flows 2-1/2 to 3 days ago.

Kiefer's initial proposal to spill to the 125% TDG tailrace level met with resistance, so he modified it to 120% to achieve consensus. Noting that transporting fish will result in higher adult returns, especially for Snake River sockeye, and that the current situation precludes sampling to evaluate passage conditions, Kiefer pushed for increased spill at Lower Granite to help flush out the debris and resume transport as soon as possible. According to section 6.2 in Appendix 1 of the Water Management Plan, the situation fits the definition of emergency measures that call for adaptive management.

Rick Kruger (Oregon) asked whether PIT tag data accrues during bypass operation; Feil said no. The screen with the debris problems is downstream of the primary bypass, so fish returning to the river aren't encountering it.

The outcome of today's meeting is that the COE will spill to 120% of the gas cap at Lower Granite as requested, Feil said. There was discussion of what that will mean in terms of actual spill. Currently the project is spilling

approximately 32.5 kcfs, and the 120% gas cap level is approximately 41 kcfs, Feil said. Oregon, Idaho and CRITFC urged the COE to push the gas cap as high as possible under the circumstances. Tom Lorz (CRITFC) urged reliance on empirical data over SYSTDG model runs to set spill caps. Kiefer advocated spilling closer to 50 kcfs and using Lower Granite tailrace TDG readings as a gage of the highest spill level possible. That level of spill would probably not exceed 120% in the tailrace based on empirical data, he said.

Dave Statler (NPT) asked how often TDG levels are monitored. Once daily and the COE sets spill caps not only to manage TDG levels in the Lower Granite tailrace but Little Goose forebay as well, Feil replied. Scott Bettin (BPA) asked about the BiOp spill requirement for Lower Granite, which is 20 kcfs. Statler suggested looking for other sites in the hydrosystem that might be impacted by the debris at Lower Granite. Staff at the four dams downriver will be alerted to check their fish screens for debris, Feil said.

TMT members stated their views.

NOAA – Data strongly indicate that fish at Lower Granite are better off in terms of adult returns if transported rather than bypassed to the river. The sooner transport operations can resume the better.

COE – Willing to spill to 120% TDG until transport can resume. Not willing to recalculate spill caps more than once daily, or alter the process of setting spill caps, which are based on both SYSTDG model runs and empirical data. TDG levels at Little Goose forebay must be taken into account when setting caps.

Nez Perce, CRITFC – Requested that project staff provide counts of lamprey mortalities in all bypass facilities including fish screens, turbine intakes, and the bypass facility. (These will be included in the COE's monthly report to Judge Redden.)

Idaho, Oregon – The situation calls for pushing the envelope on the spill cap in order to aid peak migration of Snake River steelhead, the most endangered fish in the basin. Along with CRITFC, urged reliance on empirical data over SYSTDG model runs for setting spill caps as high as possible without exceeding 120% in the Lower Granite tailrace.

The COE will issue a teletype to the project calling for spill to the gas cap of 41 kcfs, up from the current level of 32.5 kcfs. Project staff will monitor the situation closely over the Memorial Day weekend and will reinstate transport operations as soon as possible. TMT will touch base again on Tuesday, May 26, for a status update on this.

### **3. Next Meeting**

The next regular TMT meeting will be on May 27 at the COE Portland office. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

<b><i>Name</i></b>	<b><i>Affiliation</i></b>
Dan Feil	COE
Shane Scott	PPC
Ritchie Graves	NOAA
Rick Kruger	Oregon
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Dave Statler	Nez Perce Tribe
Mike Butchko	Powerex
Scott Bettin	BPA
Howard Schaller	USFWS
Bob Heinith	CRITFC