

# COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

## TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

August 21, 2009 Conference Call

### FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator/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 Dworshak Operations**

As follow up to the TMT discussion of Dworshak operations on 8/19, Dan Feil, COE, referred TMT members to web pages on the Idaho Power website that showed data on Hells Canyon releases; Feil noted outflows had been as high as 21 kcfs on Thursday, 8/20. Feil added that temperatures at Lower Granite tailwater were at 64.9°F and asked the TMT members for their input on when to begin the step-down of Dworshak outflows. Russ Kiefer, ID, said that based on the most recent temperature information, he supported a shift down to 10 kcfs at noon on 8/21 and another step down to 8 kcfs on 8/24. All other TMT members present on the call (OR, Nez Perce, USFWS, BPA and BOR) supported the shifts as well.

**Action/Next Steps:** The COE planned to shift Dworshak outflows down to 10 kcfs at noon on 8/21 and planned to shift down to 8 kcfs (1 big and 1 small unit) at 0600 hours on 8/24.

#### **Review Grand Coulee Operations**

As follow up to the 8/19 TMT discussion of Grand Coulee operations, Tony Norris, BPA, reported that the intention of the Action Agencies was and still is to maintain flow objectives of daily averages of 105 kcfs with 50 kcfs spill at McNary and coordinate with the Salmon Managers if the operation cannot be met. Salmon Managers Dave Wills, USFWS and Russ Kiefer, ID, said that meeting this objective would satisfy their recommendation to hit elevation 1278' on 8/29 at Grand Coulee, as was discussed during the 8/19 TMT meeting. Norris acknowledged the Salmon Manager's concerns regarding flows that were expressed during the meeting on 8/19 and added that communication around this issue could have been managed in a better way.

**Action/Next Steps:** Norris said that TMT could expect to see a steady draft of Grand Coulee pool between now and the end of the month and committed to communicating updates to the Salmon Managers through Paul Wagner, Chair of FPAC, who was scheduled to return from vacation the week of 8/24.

### **Bonneville Spillway**

Dan Feil, COE, reported that maintenance on a spillway gate at Bonneville would require three days of a pool elevation of 72', which is 4.5' lower than the pool will need to be by September 8, when in water work is scheduled to begin for the second phase of The Dalles' spillwall construction. Feil acknowledged the challenge in bringing the pool down to that elevation, given the tight timeframe and overlap with Autumn Treaty Fishing. He said that the COE was exploring the possibility of using John Day pool to store water, which would likely result in going above elevation 265' at John Day. Feil clarified that there would be no net effects on flows at Bonneville associated with this proposed maintenance operation. TMT members discussed effects that might be associated with this operation for maintenance, including delays to fish passage at John Day, as well as effects on flows at McNary, Grand Coulee and The Dalles. Rick Kruger, OR, said that he would need a written description of the proposed operations (including a justification and description of anticipated effects) that he could share with his fellow ODFW staff before he could weigh in on the proposed operation. As to whether this maintenance could be performed any other time of the year, the COE responded that it would need to occur outside of the in-water work season at The Dalles.

### **Little Goose Spillway Weir Update**

Dan Feil, COE, recalled the discussion around timing for closure of the spillway weir planned for 8/31. Feil gave TMT a head's up that if river flows drop such that the spillway weir needs to be closed earlier than planned, that there will need to be a TMT call to discuss the issue. Feil noted that TMT members should reference table 11 in footnote 5 in the Fish Operations Plan to find the guidance that relates to this issue. Rick Kruger, OR, responded that the COE should make work crews available to close the weir when/if that scenario occurs and also said that he would need to see a written description of the proposed operations (including a justification and description of anticipated effects) that he could share with his fellow ODFW staff before he could weigh in on the proposed operation.

**TMT Schedule: 9/2:** face-to-face TMT meeting 9:00 a.m.

Agenda items will include:

- Notes Review
- Autumn Treaty Fishing Update
- Libby Operations update
- End of MOP
- 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 Erin Halton (DS Consulting), with representatives of BPA, COE, USFWS, BOR, Idaho, Oregon, the Nez Perce Tribe 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. Dworshak Operations**

On August 18, the COE increased Dworshak outflows to 12 kcfs in anticipation of warmer weather this week, Feil recalled. At its August 19 meeting TMT decided to continue 12 kcfs flows until today, when further decisions would be made. The tentative plan was to back off to full powerhouse flows of around 10 kcfs today and run that through the weekend, then drop outflows to 8 kcfs on Monday, August 24.

Yesterday, August 20, releases from Hells Canyon Dam peaked at 21 kcfs and at 18.5 kcfs on August 19, according to the Idaho Power web page. These are peak flows, not daily averages. Idaho Power's forecast through the weekend is for a daily average of 16 kcfs flows from Hells Canyon, although daily averages have yet to go that high. Brownlee reservoir is currently at elevation 2,060 feet, forecasted to be down to 2,056 feet by August 23.

Feil asked TMT whether the tentative plan for Dworshak still holds in light of this new information. Not only is Lower Granite tailwater cooling off, locations downriver are cooling as well, Dave Statler (Nez Perce Tribe) said. That appears to be a natural cooling effect. Dave Wills (USFWS) asked whether the COE is confident that water released from Hells Canyon Dam on August 17 or 18 has actually reached the Lower Granite tailwater gage.

Temperatures at Anatone gage have been gradually increasing to 73 degrees F over the past few days, Steve Hall (COE Walla Walla) reported. Over the weekend of August 15-16, temperatures dipped to 72.5 degrees, a sign that Hells Canyon water has reached the Anatone gage. Hall didn't think Anatone temperatures have peaked yet because Idaho Power discharges from Hells Canyon continue to increase. Therefore, temperatures from the Anatone portion of Hells Canyon are likely to continue to increase. Nevertheless, the 12 kcfs releases from Dworshak appear to have tempered the heat well, and temperatures overall are decreasing. Hall and Statler estimated that it takes 3 to 3.5 days for flows from Hells Canyon to reach Lower Granite tailwater under present conditions. The Orofino gage is on the mainstem Clearwater River but upstream of the north fork of the Clearwater, which is where cooler water from

Dworshak enters the Columbia system, Russ Kiefer (Idaho) explained. For that reason, Orofino readings tend to be warmer than those further downstream.

The Salmon Managers (Idaho, Nez Perce Tribe, USFWS, and Oregon) all agreed on a recommendation to drop Dworshak outflows to full powerhouse this evening, then drop again to 8 kcfs on August 23 until the end of August or elevation 1,535 feet is attained, whichever comes first. The COE assumed a daily average outflow of 11 kcfs today, not 12 kcfs, with the change happening at noon. Oregon, USFWS, the Nez Perce Tribe, and Idaho did not object to that. The COE plan is to ramp down Dworshak outflows from 11 kcfs to full powerhouse at noon today, then step down again to 8 kcfs at 6 am, August 23, using a big and small unit. BPA and USFWS approved of this operation.

### **3. Grand Coulee Operations**

Wills reported on the Salmon Managers' discussion of Grand Coulee operations yesterday. There was a general preference [among the Salmon Managers](#) for flattening Grand Coulee flows ~~between now~~ and to draft the reservoir to elevation 1,278 feet on August 29-30, although concurrence on that wasn't complete. Tony Norris (BPA) asked whether that means that the draft objective was met and any refill over the weekend would be considered irrelevant. Wills expressed a preference for hitting the target elevation on August 29 and not refill over the weekend.

Norris asked what result the Salmon Managers want at McNary. He suggested a daily average flow of 105 kcfs with a weekly mean of 50 kcfs spill at Bonneville and coordinate with the Salmon Managers if it cannot be met. That sounds reasonable, Kiefer said. The Action Agencies' primary objective all along has been to maintain flows of 105 kcfs at McNary and 50 kcfs spill at Bonneville, Norris emphasized. The plan is to provide enough water for both during the rest of August. Average flows this week were around 115 kcfs at McNary, largely attributable to unexpected increases in flow from Brownlee Dam and Dworshak Dam. From now until the end of spill season, our current estimates show that there will be enough water to maintain the 50% operation at McNary through the end of the month.

The Action Agencies will communicate with TMT if there are any changes to Grand Coulee operations between now and the next TMT meeting on September 2. USFWS, Oregon and Idaho had no objections to that plan.

### **4. Spill at Bonneville**

Feil gave TMT a heads-up that the Bonneville pool needs to be full, i.e. at elevation 76.5 feet, beginning September 8 when in-water construction starts on The Dalles spill wall. After spill ends August 31, and before September 8, the COE needs to perform maintenance on the spill gates. This presents a challenge because the repair requires a low pool elevation of around 72 feet, meaning the pool needs to rise by 4.5 feet in 4 days (September 4-8) after the repair is

finished. Because there won't be much water in the system between now and when the pool needs to be full, the COE is planning how to manage flows to accomplish this. The COE is working with the tribes on ways to get it done without impacting treaty fishing.

There has been discussion of using John Day reservoir to store 2 feet of water which would add flexibility during the lengthy construction period. It appears that raising the Bonneville pool elevation from 72 to 76.5 feet in 4 days will be easier if John Day reservoir is used to store extra water beginning August 24. Feil asked TMT whether they approve of using storage at John Day to help fill Bonneville pool by the morning of September 8.

Wills asked about potential impacts of the spill gate repair on Bonneville flows. The repair will take 2-4 days (from August 31 to September 4) after spill season ends. Spill for the refill will occur at John Day on September 4-8. No reduction in flows at Bonneville is expected.

Kiefer asked how this operation will affect fish protection measures at John Day. Spill there now is 30% of flows, which are 90-100 kcfs, Feil replied. Rick Kruger (Oregon) asked what flows are expected to be next week, particularly at McNary. They might be slightly reduced if Hells Canyon flows back off, Feil replied. The COE estimates that total river flows could drop by 15-20 kcfs next week, but that would be sufficient for full powerhouse flows at John Day as well as 30% spill. The spill rate at The Dalles is 40% so that would be harder to maintain, Kiefer added.

If migration time is decreased by spilling John Day for this operation during the migration period prior to August 31, Oregon and other litigants will probably object to it, Kruger said. More information is needed. Kruger requested a written description of the operation and its effects. Travel time through John Day pool as well as travel time through the river below John Day should be considered. The COE will take these comments into account, Feil said.

### ***5. Little Goose Spillway Weir***

The current plan, as discussed at the last TMT meeting August 19, was to spill approximately 11.6 kcfs through the Little Goose spillway weir and other bays and maintain that level unless river flows change. Feil asked TMT whether that plan should continue until the close of business August 31, at which time the spillway weir will be shut down and 11.6 kcfs spilled through the remaining bays until midnight.

Yesterday at FPAC, the possibility of shutting the spillway weir down during working hours on August 27, 3 days early, was discussed, Kruger said. If spill can be maintained through the remaining bays, Oregon would not object to this operation, but Kruger expressed concern about spillway efficiency if the weir is removed early. He asked the COE for a written description of this operation, including the reasons for it, the anticipated change in fish passage efficiency, the

numbers of fish expected to pass over the spillway, and its compliance with the Fish Passage Plan.

The FPP calls for closing the spillway weir when river discharges are less than 39.6 kcfs, per Little Goose table 11, Feil replied. The spillway weir is currently operating in the high crest position, and table 11 gives the appropriate spill amounts. Oregon's view is that if flows drop over the weekend to a level at which a change in spillway weir operation needs to occur, the COE should make work crews available on the weekend.

The COE plans to run the spillway weir until August 31, Feil said. If that changes, the COE will notify TMT via email and schedule further discussion as needed. USFWS and Idaho did not object to this operation.

Yesterday's flow average at Lower Granite was 37 kcfs, Tony Norris (BPA) noted. The next regularly scheduled TMT meeting will be September 2. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

<b><i>Name</i></b>	<b><i>Affiliation</i></b>
Tony Norris	BPA
Jeremy Giovando	COE
Steve Hall	COE Walla Walla
Rob Diaz	Integral Renewables
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Tom Le	Puget Sound Energy
Dave Wills	USFWS
Dan Feil	COE
Doug Baus	COE
Margaret Filardo	FPC
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