

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

September 2, 2009 Meeting

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Robin Gumpert

Notes: Christa Leonard

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 Meeting Minutes for August 19, 21, 2009

Russ Kiefer, ID, corrected a misspelling of his last name.

Revisions to the official notes of 8/19, regarding discussions surrounding Grand Coulee, will be shared with Pat Vivian, official note taker, for correction at which point the notes will be considered final. The COE will send an email notice when the finalized notes have been posted to the web.

End of MOP

Dan Feil, COE, referred TMT members to BiOp RPA table #5 (pages 7 and 8). He quoted criteria for end of MOP operations including the September 1st date and the presence of a small number of juveniles, and contingent on other system needs such as navigation safety. Feil explained that the COE would like to raise the Little Goose pool with a buffer of .5' to 1' to assist with navigation safety needs. Pools will continue to fill through out September as water becomes available from expected precipitation.

It was noted that this issue had been discussed at FPAC but that consensus had not yet been reached. TMT members were polled for feedback:

- Dave Wills, **USFWS**, agreed that the BiOp and FOP criteria had been met for end of MOP. While the preference would be to use water from natural flows rather than augmentation water from Lower Granite, he acknowledged the COE's need for flexibility to meet navigation safety requirements. After Little Goose, he preferred to begin filling at Ice Harbor and on upstream.
- Rick Kruger, **Oregon**, agreed with the comments from USFWS.
- Paul Wagner, **NOAA**, concurred noting that there is no definitive data on higher pool levels aiding fish passage and that emphasis needs to lie in water temperature control. It was noted that temperatures are expected to drop as rain moves into the forecast over the Labor Day holiday. NOAA did not object to the COE's proposed operation.
- Jim Litchfield, **Montana**, agreed to the proposed operation.
- Russ Kiefer, **Idaho**, said the COE's proposal was reasonable. He also noted a concern that language re: MOP operations remained the same in the RPA while flow augmentation from Dworshak was extended into September. This could lead to use of flow augmentation water to fill pools, and this would be a conflict. Russ

suggested changes need to be made to the WMP to ensure the two operations do not come into conflict.

- Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, noted no objection to the proposed operation.

Action/Next Steps:

As water becomes available, the COE will begin filling Little Goose, then Ice Harbor, and on upstream. This operation will likely begin in a few weeks; however, a caveat was noted that if navigation safety at Little Goose becomes an issue, the COE may need to take steps to provide elevation at the pool (which may require use of augmentation water from Lower Granite).

Autumn Treaty Fishing Update

Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, referred TMT to SOR 2009-C5, posted as a link to the agenda. He reviewed progress of this three week Treaty Fishing period, which is scheduled to be completed September 8th – 12th. He noted that no issues have been reported by local law enforcement officials. Kyle reported that the request for steady pools have been met successfully, with a range of .5-1' held steady at all three pools (Bonneville, John Day and The Dalles). A meeting is scheduled for September 10th where catch data will be analyzed and additional fishing needs will be assessed, possibly prompting the release of a new SOR. Dan Feil, COE, noted that drafting transitions for construction activities will occur as able over the Labor Day holiday by 0630 Tuesday morning 9/8 in order to avoid impacting the fishery.

The COE also noted deferred maintenance at Bonneville to accommodate the treaty fishery, and this maintenance will need to be revisited just prior to the spill season in 2010.

Kyle closed by sharing net flight counts from August 26th: 532 nets were counted; 248 on the Oregon side and 284 on the Washington side; 39% at Bonneville, 20% at The Dalles and 41% at John Day.

Review Libby Operation

Dan Feil, COE, noted that Libby operated at bull trout minimums for all of August at 7 kcfs outflows. On September 1st, outflows were reduced to 6kcfs where they will remain through the rest of the month. TMT members present raised no questions regarding this operation.

Operations Review

Reservoirs: Grand Coulee elevation was at 1277.1' with 1283' or higher being the target for end of September. Hungry Horse was at 3554.76' moving toward 3550' by September 30th. Libby was at elevation 2443.1', with inflows of 6.3 kcfs and outflows of 6 kcfs. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2062.3', with inflows of 8.7kcfs and outflows of 10.7 kcfs. Dworshak met the 1535' elevation target on 8/31 and was currently at 1533.1' with inflows of 1.1 kcfs and outflows of 8 kcfs. Lower Granite daily average outflows were 28.2 kcfs- the tailwater temperature was 66.3 degrees. McNary daily average flows were 83.7 kcfs, and Bonneville daily average flows were 93 kcfs. Russ Kiefer pointed out that the Dworshak augmentation flows provided into September proved necessary and useful

this year. Dan Feil complimented the team on doing a great job of working together this summer toward the goal of maintaining water temperatures below 68 degrees F at Lower Granite.

Fish: Paul Wager, NOAA, referred TMT to information posted to the Fish Passage Center site (DART data). Adult Fall Chinook running around 10,000 per day (122,300 total for the season); jack numbers were very strong, with counts at 3,000 per day (39,000 total); steelhead counts dropped from 34,000 per day to 6,000 per day (500,000 total). Russ Kiefer, Idaho, reported that the sockeye count was 664 at the Stanley Basin traps. Juvenile subyearling Chinook are trending down with less than 100 per day passing at Snake River projects and less than 1,000 at Columbia River projects. Paul noted that steelhead are trending well above the 10 year average, as are Chinook, although not by as much.

Power System: Nothing to report; managing low flow conditions through Fall until more precipitation enters the system.

Water Quality: It was noted that water quality is currently the best of 2009.

TMT Schedule: Face-to-face meeting scheduled for 9:00 am PST Wednesday 9/16

Agenda items will include:

- Notes Review
- End of MOP update
- Autumn Treaty Fishing recap with possible SOR presented
- Dalles Spillwall construction update

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Meeting
September 2, 2009**

1. Introduction

Today's TMT meeting was chaired by Dan Feil (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (DS Consulting), with representatives of COE, Oregon, USFWS, NOAA, Montana, BPA, BOR, Idaho, 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 for August 19 and 21, 2009

August 19 official minutes, Operations Review – John Roache (BOR) added to the fifth paragraph on Grand Coulee operations, “BPA and BOR acknowledged that the Action Agencies could have done a better job in communicating with the Salmon Managers on this issue. BPA and BOR also committed to provide more coordination in the future during summer low flow conditions.”

August 19 facilitator's notes and official minutes, Operations Review – Russ Kiefer (Idaho) asked whether a reference to a letter Oregon was preparing to send the Action Agencies regarding Grand Coulee operations really refers to a letter FPAC was drafting to the joint chiefs of staff. Rick Kruger (Oregon) will check on this and let TMT know if the official record needs to be amended.

With these changes, the August 19 and 21 official minutes and facilitator's notes were deemed final.

3. End of MOP Operations

Feil read TMT an excerpt from RPA #5 on pages 7-8 of the RPA table in the BiOp, “Lower Snake projects will be operated at minimum operating pool within a 1-foot operating range from April 3 until small numbers of juvenile migrants are present, approximately September 1 unless adjusted to meet authorized purposes, primarily navigation. The Lower Granite reservoir may be raised as needed after September 1 to operate the fish facility to support broodstock collection.”

Small numbers of juveniles are definitely present in the Snake River system, and it's after September 1, so the Action Agencies would like to add water to the Little Goose pool as a buffer against potential problems at the Lower Granite navigation lock, Feil said. He asked TMT for feedback on a proposal to fill Little Goose reservoir by half a foot to a foot as a first priority as soon as water becomes available, then fill the reservoirs from Ice Harbor on upriver to support

adult migration. Filling Lower Granite reservoir will hinge on resolving adult passage issues at the holding tank.

Dave Wills (USFWS) and Paul Wagner (NOAA) agreed that FPAC had not reached consensus on this. TMT members did reach consensus today on an operation. They gave their views:

USFWS – Supported filling Little Goose reservoir by up to a foot, but any water beyond that should go to other projects in ascending order up the river.

NOAA and Oregon – Approved of the operation as USFWS stated it.

Montana, CRITFC, BOR and BPA – Approved of the operation.

Idaho – Approved of the operation. Language in the Water Management Plan should be changed to reflect this new consensus on extending Dworshak flow augmentation into September so there's no conflict with provisions in the WMP for MOP operations to end as of August 31. Updating the WMP will allow TMT to end MOP operations when there are still low numbers of juveniles in the river without violating BiOp criteria. The draft WMP will be out for review at the end of September, Feil added.

Karl Kanbergs (COE) cautioned that flows in the Lower Granite navigation lock entrance are so low that the COE might have to take action before fall rains begin. The consequences of not doing so could be a ruptured fuel barge.

TMT will revisit MOP operations at its next two regular meetings on September 16 and 30.

4. Autumn Treaty Fishing Update – SOR 2009-C5

Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) gave a review of the first week of 2009 fall treaty fishing. There have been no reports of problems caused by river operations, and compliance with elevation criteria has been high. Using CRITFC's criteria of a 1-foot stable elevation band at all three pools, compliance last week was 98% for Bonneville pool, 77% for The Dalles, and 100% for John Day during the first week of fishing. Using the COE criteria of 1.5 feet elevation bands at Bonneville and John Day pools and 3 feet at The Dalles, compliance was 100% at Bonneville and John Day and 100% at The Dalles.

Fishing will continue this week and the next as specified in SOR 2009-C5. The tribes will decide at a September 10 hearing whether to schedule additional fisheries beyond that.

Discussion turned to the effects on fishing of operational constraints on The Dalles tailwater beginning at 6 am September 8 for spill wall construction. The COE will hold firm to at least 76.5 feet elevation throughout the construction

period. Dittmer said the tribes are expecting the transition to this operation will occur over Labor Day weekend.

For the September 8-12 fishery, the COE will maintain the same elevation hard constraints as it has for previous fisheries, 1.5 feet at Bonneville 3.0 feet at The Dalles, and 1.5 feet at John Day, Doug Baus (COE) said. Bonneville pool may be higher due to The Dalles Spillwall Construction Project, but the the COE will still attempt to stay within a 1.5 foot range at Bonneville. The COE has deferred greasing the dogging pockets until next spring because of the potential impact on treaty fishing. Project staff are not happy, as this is the second time the work has been deferred. The COE plans to ask TMT for flexibility in spring 2010 to get the work done. The timeframe will be tight due to construction of The Dalles spill wall.

On August 26, CRITFC counted 532 nets in the lower Columbia pools, 248 on the Oregon shore and 284 on the Washington shore, Dittmer said. Of those, 39% were at Bonneville, 20% at The Dalles, and 41% at John Day. TMT will revisit treaty fishing at its next two regular meetings.

5. Review Libby Operations

Feil gave a brief update on Libby operations. For all of August, the project released 7 kcfs bull trout minimums as expected. On September 1, the project stepped down to 6 kcfs bull trout minimums. The 6 kcfs outflows will continue through September.

6. Operations Review

a. Reservoirs. Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,277.1 feet, targeting an end of September elevation of 1,283 feet or higher. Hungry Horse is at elevation 3,554.76 feet, with outflows of 2.5 kcfs, headed for an end of September elevation of 3,550 feet.

Libby is at elevation 2,443.1 feet, with inflows of 6.3 kcfs and outflows of 6 kcfs. Albeni Falls is at elevation 2,062.3 feet, with inflows of 8.7 kcfs and outflows of 10.7 kcfs. Dworshak reached elevation 1535 feet on August 31. The current Dworshak elevation is 1,553.1 feet, with inflows of 1.1 kcfs and outflows of 8 kcfs.

Mean daily discharges are 28.2 kcfs at Lower Granite, 83.7 kcfs at McNary, and 98 kcfs at Bonneville. Flows remain low. Temperatures are slightly above 68 degrees F in Lower Granite forebay and 66.3 degrees in the tailrace.

This was a good year to reserve some cool water from Dworshak for September, Kiefer said. His modeling indicates that if Dworshak had gone to minimum outflows at the end of August, temperatures at Lower Granite would have exceeded 68 degrees within a few days. Idaho, COE, NOAA, USFWS and Montana all agreed that this year's operations of managing Dworshak flows and keeping temperatures at Lower Granite below the 68-degree limit has gone well.

b. Fish. Adults – Fall Chinook have been passing Bonneville at the rate of 10,000 fish per day for the past week, with a cumulative total of 122,000 fish for the season, Wagner reported. Jack counts remain high at 3,000 per day, with a cumulative total of 39,000 jacks for the season. This is significantly above the 10-year average of 8,000 jacks.

Steelhead passage peaked at 34,000 fish per day and is now 5-6,000 fish per day. A total of 146,000 wild steelhead have passed Bonneville this season, and 200,000 steelhead have passed John Day. As of August 30, 664 sockeye had reached the Stanley basin, and they're still arriving at the rate of 10-15 per day.

Juveniles – Subyearling Chinook passage is trending down, with less than 100 fish per day at all of the Snake River projects, and less than 1,000 fish per day at the lower river projects. It's been a good year for Chinook, with a total of 91,000 fish for the season, 133% of the 10-year average. This year has been an outstanding one for steelhead, with a total of 455,000 fish as compared to 247,000 fish in 2008. The 2009 steelhead count is well above the 10-year average. Although it's been a warm summer, temperatures (which are currently hovering around 70 degrees F at Bonneville and the Camas Washougal gage) haven't been much higher than the 10-year average.

c. Power System. There was nothing to report except that BPA is working hard to manage low flows through fall.

d. Water Quality. Spill has ended and gas levels are down, with temperatures beginning to decline, Feil said.

7. Next Meeting

The next scheduled TMT meetings will be on September 16 and 30. The September 16 agenda will include the end of MOP operations, a recap of treaty fishing with perhaps another SOR, and an update on The Dalles spill wall construction. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

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