

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

September 16, 2009 Meeting

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Erin Halton

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 September 2, 2009

Paul Wagner, NOAA, corrected data presented in the 9/2 facilitator's notes: Adult Fall Chinook were at 122,300- not 12,300 as erroneously recorded.

End of MOP

Dan Feil, COE, reminded TMT members of the September 2nd discussion surrounding MOP operations and the COE suggestion to fill the Little Goose pool for navigational needs. This operation did occur on September 4th. Also at the September 2nd meeting, TMT members had expressed preference to wait to fill other pools until Dworshak augmentation water was out. Fill did start on September 9th, starting at Ice Harbor and working up stream. Since then, accumulated waters have been or will be drafted back out. The Action Agencies expressed the need for flexibility around water movement and noted that fill will resume as water becomes available.

Russ Kiefer, ID and Paul Wagner, NOAA said that the Salmon Managers had observed that pool elevations had increased at Ice Harbor and Lower Monumental. Tony Norris, BPA, explained the plan was to use greater pool elevation flexibility to better meet demand and have the pools back down in the MOP range after flow augmentation from Dworshak has ended so that this water is not used to refill the reservoirs. Norris noted that low natural flows and the need to meet Bonneville minimums added to the complexities for this year. Kiefer said that he believed Idaho would not have significant concerns with this plan of operation. Salmon Managers also expressed the need to include clarifying guidance language in next year's Water Management Plan. They explained that there is a need to aid fish through water flow while avoiding thermal block on adults.

Dave Statler asked what the operating range is for the end of MOP; Norris explained the "MOP to Top" model. Statler described specifics regarding juvenile Pacific Lamprey habitat, growth and passage needs. He noted the need for more studies in the future and recommended inclusion of Lamprey considerations in future operational decision making.

Autumn Treaty Fishing Update

Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, reviewed specifics of SOR 2009-C5 and SOR 2009-C6, posted as a links to the agenda. Current operations began on Monday 9/14 at 0600 and will continue through Friday 9/18 at 6:00; Dittmer noted that and the fishing effort will be rigorous. Dittmer noted that three Zone 6 pools were held within a 1 ft constraint. He acknowledged the COE's need to have specific elevations during The Dalles spillwall construction. The COE noted that SOR 2009-C5 was especially challenging; thanks went out to Kyle Dittmer and the Action Agencies for their excellent coordination. Dittmer said that using 1ft band criteria, compliance was close to 100% at Bonneville and John Day and 77% at The Dalles. The COE responded that they will operate the pools as they have for the previous SOR's and that hard constraints will be maintained for this weeks fishing; Doug Baus, COE, clarified that no unusual operations are expected for the near term. Dittmer noted that the forecast for passage numbers are expected to be fairly high compared to previous years. Catch data will be analyzed and additional fishing needs will be assessed, possibly prompting the release of a new SOR. Net flight data was recorded on Wednesday 9/9 as follows: 709 nets; 268 at Bonneville (38%), 157 at The Dalles (22%), 281 at John Day (40%).

Kyle also reported a boat capsizing on Monday involving the family of Bruce Jim of the Warm Springs Tribe. He noted that two crew members were still missing. Questions can be directed to Sara Thompson (CRITFC PR) at 503.238.3567. TMT members were reminded of the dangers of river fishing and noted that their thoughts were with the affected communities during this difficult time.

The Dalles Spillwall Construction Update

Dan Feil, COE, reviewed recent activities at The Dalles spillwall construction site: the contractor mobilized to the work site during the last week of August. Feil noted that the maximum draft when there is a "loaded pick" is 6.5'. A deviation request for Bonneville pool went into effect on 9/8. Inspection of work area (specifically sediment) was reported as looking good and no excess debris was observed. Workers started setting pre-cast blocks yesterday and expect to set 4-6 per week. Feil reminded TMT that construction completion is expected the first part of April 2010 and also that critical maintenance at Bonneville spill gates (pool to be at 72'+) will be scheduled for 2-4 days prior to 4/10/10 before spill season commences.

Dave Statler asked about the purpose of the wall construction; Dan responded that the new wall will improve juvenile fish survival as spill will move from simultaneous operation of 6 bays to 8 (though quantity of spill will remain the same- 40 % of total river flow). In addition, egress will shift to the North side (away from predators) and to facilitate down stream conveyance better than current spill pattern. Dan also reminded TMT of past discussions of using John Day pool as reserve during construction in order to reserves the right to do so and will coordinate with TMT if they need to put this operation into effect.

Action/Next: Further updates on The Dalles Spillwall construction will be presented to TMT every two weeks.

Albeni Falls

Amy Reese, COE, reported that there is a meeting scheduled for 9/17 to discuss winter lake level operations. Multiple agencies, including the Lake Pend Oreille Commission, will craft an SOR prior to next Wednesday, 9/23. The SOR will be posted as a link to the TMT agenda by Tuesday 9/22.

Action/Next: TMT will discuss the SOR during a conference call next Wednesday, 9/23.

Operations Review

Reservoirs: Grand Coulee was at elevation 1280.2', with an end of September elevation target of 1283' or higher. Hungry Horse was at 3552.42' with outflows of 2.5 kcfs and an end of September elevation target of 3550'. (John Roache, BOR, noted that of the two gauges for Hungry Horse, the USGS gauge is the "official" gauge.) Libby was at elevation 2442.6', with inflows of 5.1 kcfs and outflows of 6 kcfs, where they will likely remain through September. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2061.9', with inflows of 10.7 kcfs and outflows of 15 kcfs. Dworshak 1520.2' with inflows of .9 kcfs and outflows of 2.4 kcfs; outflows at Dworshak will drop to 1.5 kcfs in the next day or two. TMT reviewed temperature data for Dworshak tail race where water temperature was noted as 49 degrees F. Lower Granite daily average flows were 23.5 kcfs. McNary daily average flows were 78 kcfs; Bonneville average flows were 93 kcfs, but were near minimums of 70 kcfs this week. It was noted that Bonneville minimum is set at 70' for public safety.

Fish: Paul Wager, NOAA, referred TMT to information posted to the Fish Passage Center site (DART data). Subyearling passage was low at all projects, signaling the end of juvenile migration. Bonneville Fall Chinook were in the range of 5,000-8,000 over the past week at a total of 233,000 to date. Fall Chinook Jacks trend continued to 1-4,600. Steelhead were winding down to 4,000 per day, with a total so far of 555,700 for the season (nearing record high!) Wild Steelhead 160,000 passing Bonneville. Shads reported in lower numbers this year, with 1.3 million so far. Wagner reviewed 10 year average data; Fall Chinook were bit lower than the 10-year averages and Jacks were way above average. TMT looked at timing trends; overall, Steelhead are on time, Fall Chinook began and ending early (mid point likely September 2nd or 3rd). Russ Kiefer noted sockeye returns to the Stanley Basin are close to done, with Lower Granite to basin conversion rates similar to last year. Although he did not have exact numbers, Russ said that close to 800 of the 1200 passing Granite have been trapped to date. Note: Russ provided an update that 777 sockeye have been trapped to date. It was also noted that only 13 adult Pacific Lamprey have been observed passing Lower Granite so far during 2009. Dave Statler noted that this year will likely be the worst of a series of consecutive abysmal counts and another reminder why Lamprey are important to monitor and operate for Lamprey protection.

Power System: Nothing to report.

Water Quality: No issues to report; TMT did review temperature data at Lower Granite, which were just below 65°F.

TMT Schedule: Conference call scheduled for 9:00 am PST Wednesday, 9/23

Agenda items will include:

- Notes Review
- Albeni Falls SOR
- Treaty Fishing SOR

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Meeting
September 16, 2009**

1. Introduction

Today's TMT meeting was chaired by Dan Feil (COE) and facilitated by Erin Halton (DS Consulting), with representatives of COE, BPA, USFWS, the Nez Perce Tribe, BOR, Montana, Idaho, NOAA, 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 September 2, 2009

Facilitator's notes under Operations Review – Fish. The total index count for fall Chinook should be 122,000 fish, not 12,000, Paul Wagner (NOAA) said.

3. End of MOP Operations

At the last TMT meeting on September 2, TMT discussed the end of MOP operations, and the COE proposed storing water in Little Goose pool to help with elevation issues at the navigation lock entrance, Feil said. TMT members preferred to fill Little Goose pool only and not the other pools, waiting instead until after Dworshak augmentation water had passed to fill them. Some filling of the pools already occurred in part due to increased flows from the middle Snake River. Little Goose went out of MOP on September 4, while Ice Harbor and Lower Monumental went out of MOP on September 9. Most of that water has or will be drafted out and pool elevations will likely be down to the MOP-MOP+1 foot range again soon. The pools will be gradually refilled in September as water becomes available.

Tony Norris (BPA) asked whether drafting the water back out of the system prior to the end of the Dworshak augmentation release was a satisfactory operation. Russ Kiefer (Idaho) and Paul Wagner (NOAA) said that it was. The Action Agencies held off on moving water out of Lower Granite in particular, but drafted all water out before augmentation flows ended. The reason for this was to avoid refilling the reservoirs using water from Dworshak, Norris said.

The Salmon Managers have no objection to this, Wagner and Kiefer said. Idaho is in favor of extending flow augmentation into early September, which was especially useful this summer because it was so hot. The Salmon Managers are trying to figure out how to manage the system so flow augmentation can be extended as needed without raising concerns about using flow augmentation water for refill purposes instead of for fish, Kiefer added.

We can talk further about how we might include language in the Water Management Plan, Norris said. But being released from the prescriptive MOP requirements provides the flexibility to operate above MOP and get back to MOP before the augmentation release is complete. If that is satisfactory, it allows flexibility and lowers the level of scrutiny for operating precisely within a narrow range. BPA has to thread that needle every day during the fish passage season. Having the flexibility to fill and draft out of MOP helps BPA position the system for the fall season. It should be easy to draft the projects back to MOP prior to the Dworshak augmentation release.

Norris and Kiefer agreed to discuss this further in terms of operations in future years – this year worked out fine. Discussion turned to the role flow augmentation plays in creating better conditions for fish. First, it helps to avoid a thermal block on adults, and secondly, it aids migration downriver, particularly for fish whose growth has been slowed by the cooler water from Dworshak, Kiefer said. Fish from the Clearwater River have high smolt to adult return rates, which makes them particularly valuable.

Dave Statler (Nez Perce Tribe) requested that the last of the stored water in Dworshak be released gradually in order to avoid potential impacts to juvenile Pacific lamprey. They rear in tributaries as larvae, gradually migrating downriver over the course of 6 to 8 years and living in the mud along shallow edges of reservoirs. Rapid fluctuations could displace them. Residents along the Clearwater have reported stranding of young lamprey when Dworshak outflows are sharply reduced. As more becomes known about the lamprey life cycle, it will be easier to tailor operational decisions to their needs.

4. Autumn Treaty Fishing – SOR 2009-C5 and SOR 2009-C6

Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) presented SOR 2009-C6, submitted to the COE last week for treaty fishing from 6 am on September 14 through 6 pm on September 18. During that period, CRITFC requested that the three lower Columbia River pools be operated within 1-foot elevation bands of 76.5-75.5 feet at Bonneville, 159.5-158.5 feet at The Dalles, and 264.5-263.5 feet at John Day. The tribes are aware that the Bonneville pool might be operated at slightly higher elevations for The Dalles spill wall construction. There could be more fishing in September following this SOR; Dittmer will keep TMT informed.

The tribes are forecasting 278,000 adult fall Chinook at Bonneville, and 600,000 steelhead, which is a near-record forecast. CRITFC's most recent net flight counted 258 nets (38%) in Bonneville pool, 157 nets (22%) in The Dalles pool, and 281 nets (40%) in John Day pool.

A recent capsizing on the river serves as a reminder that fishing is a dangerous activity. Some crew members of that boat are still missing. Anyone wanting more information on the status of the missing fishers should contact CRITFC's information officer, Sarah Thompson, at 503-238-3567.

The COE will provide the same operation as it has for previous fisheries, with a 1.5-foot elevation band at Bonneville and John Day, and a 3-foot elevation band at The Dalles, Doug Baus (COE) said. The COE appreciates all the coordination that went into a successful operation for SOR 2009-C5 despite multiple activities on the river. Dittmer noted that compliance has been close to 100% for either the 1-foot bands or the 1.5- and 3-foot bands, making this a very successful fishery operation.

5. The Dalles Spill Wall Construction Update

Feil gave a brief update on behalf of project manager Pat Duyck, who could not attend today. The 2009-10 construction season is progressing smoothly at this point. During the last week of August, the contractor mobilized equipment to the site and found that modifications to the large crane barge last year were successful in reducing the vessel draft to 6.5 feet. In-water work started as scheduled on September 8, the same day the deviation request to operate Bonneville pool up to 78 feet elevation went into effect. Inspection of the work area showed little or no real impact to the site from spill in terms of debris being deposited or damage done. The Dalles tailwater has remained at approximately 76-77 feet elevation, hitting 78 feet only briefly, Karl Kanbergs (COE) reported. It was fortunate for this operation that 2009 turned out to be a low water year.

Feil alerted TMT that in early April 2010, the COE will need to complete postponed maintenance on the Bonneville spill gates in the brief window between the end of spill wall construction and the beginning of spill on April 10. The spill gate maintenance will require a Bonneville pool elevation of 72 feet and take approximately 2-4 days. It cannot be completed while spill is occurring due to safety concerns.

All spill wall construction will take place on the shallow rock shelf, Feil said, making the elevation constraints an ongoing requirement until the wall is completed. The spill percentage will remain the same, 40% of total river flow at The Dalles. This operational change will require that new spill patterns be developed and will help guide fish away from the bridge islands and into fast-moving deeper water along the north shore, away from predators.

At the August 19 meeting, Feil recalled, TMT discussed using the John Day pool for storage during September to provide added flexibility for spill wall construction. That would involve exceeding the 1.5-foot elevation constraint, to be exceeded only if absolutely necessary to maintain the conditions required for construction. The COE hasn't pursued this and doesn't foresee a need to so at this time, but it remains an option of last resort. TMT will be notified if the need arises. The pool elevation constraint will end on October 1.

6. Albeni Falls SOR

The SOR for winter operations wasn't posted to the TMT page today because it is still in process, Amy Reese (COE Seattle) reported. Signed on USFWS letterhead, the SOR represents a collaboration of USFWS, NOAA, BPA, the COE, the Pend Oreille Lake Commission, and local PUDs. The SOR will be released September 22. TMT members scheduled a conference call on September 23 to discuss it.

7. Operations Review

a. Reservoirs. Libby is at elevation 2,442.6 feet, with inflows of 5.1 kcfs and outflows of 6 kcfs. Albeni Falls is at elevation 2,061.9 feet, with inflows of 10.7 kcfs and outflows of 15 kcfs, Feil reported.

Dworshak is at elevation 120.17 feet, with inflows of 0.9 kcfs and outflows of 2.4 kcfs. TMT members observed that Dworshak forebay elevations were incorrect as posted to the TMT page. Temperatures at Dworshak tailwater are currently around 49 degrees F.

Daily flow averages are 23.5 kcfs at Lower Granite, 78 kcfs at McNary, and 93 kcfs at Bonneville. On September 13, Bonneville flows were 72 kcfs, followed by 71 kcfs on September 14, and 93 kcfs on September 15. The instantaneous minimum at Bonneville Dam is 70 kcfs, Tony Norris said. This limit was written into the Water Control Manual for public safety purposes.

Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,280.2 feet, headed to 1,283 feet or higher by the end of September, John Roache (BOR) reported. Hungry Horse is at elevation 3,552.42 feet, with outflows of 2.5 kcfs. The operation is on target to hit elevation 3,550 feet by the end of September. There are two forebay gages at Hungry Horse, Roache and Norris said, with the official USGS gage reporting the elevation as 3,552.42 feet. The other gage, used by project staff for real-time information, tends to drift off and give inaccurate readings.

b. Fish. Juveniles – The juvenile migration has all but ended, with subyearling index counts of less than 100 fish per day at Lower Snake projects (Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental), Wagner reported. Index counts at McNary and Bonneville have been less than 500 fish per day for the past week.

Adults – Fall Chinook are passing Bonneville at the rate of 5,000-8,000 fish per day, or 233,000 fish to date for 2009. Fall Chinook jacks are still following a trend of nearly a 1:1 ratio for jacks to adults, or 4,600 adults and 3,000 jacks. In past years, jack counts have been only 30-40% of adult counts. Last year at this time, the fall Chinook count was 262,000 fish, and the 10-year average is 284,000 fish, so this year's count of 233,000 fish is low. This year's count of 85,000 jacks is far above the 2008 count of 29,000 jacks and the 10-year average of 24,000 jacks.

Steelhead passage is winding down, with 4,000 fish per day over the past week. The count to date is 555,700 fish, which could set a record. Last year's count was 323,000 fish, and the 10-year average is 309,000 fish. To date, 160,000 wild steelhead have passed Bonneville this year.

In terms of timing, steelhead passage is following its typical pattern, tapering off through the end of September. Fall Chinook passage came a bit early and is ending early. The mid-passage date is usually September 7; this year it was September 2 or 3.

This year's redbfish return will probably be close to 800 fish in the Stanley River basin, Kiefer said. Idaho is doing genetic sampling of adults which allows tracking of individuals through the end of the season.

Shad counts were relatively low this year at 1.4 million fish. Last year's count was 2.14 million fish, and the 10-year average is 3.1 million, Wagner said.

While salmon and steelhead passage counts are looking good this year, if Snake basin adult pacific lamprey counts continue in the same direction, 2009 will be one of the most abysmal years on record for the Snake, Statler said. Every fish in this area is precious in terms of reproduction.

Water temperatures in the Clearwater and Snake rivers are down to 65 degrees F as of this morning, Kiefer said. Wagner wondered whether water temperatures at Lower Granite Dam would rise above their current level of 65 degrees F when Dworshak flow augmentation ends. Statler wondered what the impact would be on temperatures in the lower Snake during a warm year like 2009 if Dworshak discharges must be reduced due to water quality concerns.

c. Power System. There was nothing to report today.

d. Water Quality. Because spill has ended, there were no water quality issues to report today.

7. Next Meeting

The next scheduled TMT meeting will be a conference call on September 23 to discuss the Albeni Falls SOR for winter operations. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Dan Feil	COE
Tony Norris	BPA
Dave Wills	USFWS
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Doug Baus	COE
Dave Statler	Nez Perce Tribe

John Roache	BOR
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Rob Diaz	Integral Renewables
Karl Kanbergs	COE
Laura Hamilton	COE
Russ George	WMC
Steve Barton	COE

Phone:

Cindy LeFleur	Washington
Amy Reese	COE Seattle
Margaret Filardo	FPC
Tim Heizenrader	Centaurus
Glen Trager	Shell Energy
Ruth Burris	PGE
Shane Scott	PPC
Dave Benner	FPC
Richelle Beck	DRA
Barry Espenson	CBB
Tom Le	Puget Sound Energy
Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC