

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

December 10, 2009 Meeting

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 Meeting Minutes for November 18, 2009

No changes to the 11/18 facilitator notes or official meeting minutes were made during the meeting and both sets are considered final.

Dalles Spillwall Project

Pat Duyck, COE-NWP, provided TMT with a status report on this project. He reported that the leveling slab work has progressed to completion, with only two more sections that need their jacking cap. Drilling has begun, with 40-45 holes completed and between 20-25 anchors installed as of 12/10. Duyck noted that the deviation request in place for the Bonneville Tailwater elevation has helped work progress smoothly and that as long as there are no major winter weather events, the construction work should be completed in March.

Action/Next Steps: Duyck will continue to provide updates as requested by TMT.

Chum Operations

Dan Feil, COE, directed TMT members to several links to the agenda, including a link to the Fish Passage Center (FPC) site detailing tracking surveys of spawning grounds. He noted that there was an increase in the number of fish in the area in early December and that in 2008, the peak counts were observed on December 9th. For 2009, numbers have been a bit higher overall compared to last year but are still lower than the 10 year average. Feil reported that there had been one time in the past week that the Bonneville tailwater went up to 16' at night. TMT reviewed the latest data on the FPC site; it showed that while the peak has probably passed, spawning is likely to continue until the week of December 21st.

Action/Next Steps: Feil will post updated data/summaries to the TMT agenda for the next TMT meeting, which will be a conference call on 12/23.

Lake Pend Oreille Post-Spawning Operations

As follow up to discussion at the 11/18 TMT meeting, Dan Feil reported that the COE held a public meeting earlier in the week to discuss their plan for post-spawning operation and give members of the public a chance to provide feedback/comments. Feil said the COE planned to review those comments and feedback form regional

representatives as they moved closer toward making an operational decision. Comments from members of the public provided during the TMT meeting included the following:

- Waterfront Property Management: feel that the impact to the property and residences surrounding the Lake need to be assessed.
- Linda Mitchell, Lake Pend Oreille Lakes Commission: the Commission has very grave concerns about the effects on the Lake and hope for further analysis before a decision is made.
- Charles Wilson, Landowner: encourage the good science people at the COE to closely examine the scale and magnitude of the effects the COE's decision might have on the Lake.

Action/Next Steps: Dan Feil, COE, thanked the members of the public for their feedback; updates on this item will be shared with the region as they are known.

Snake River Zero Nighttime Generation

Dan Feil, COE, reported that between December and February, the Action Agencies have the authority to do zero nighttime generation on the Snake River projects if needed. Tony Norris, BPA, added that per the guidance from the Salmon Managers developed in 2005, the criteria for dropping to zero generation has been met for this season and while not yet exercised this season, the Action Agencies may utilize this option between now and February.

Action/Next Steps: The COE will update the Water Management Plan Fall/Winter Update with the criteria language referred to by Norris during the meeting. The COE will send out a teletype if they drop to zero generation on the Snake River; Norris will likely provide TMT with a summary report in February.

Operations Review

Reservoirs: Grand Coulee was at elevation 1281.7' and Hungry Horse was at 3540.40' with outflows of in the range of 3 kcfs. Libby was at elevation 2427.2', with inflows of 2.1 kcfs and outflows of 2.3 kcfs. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2051.25', with inflows and outflows of 8.3 kcfs. Dworshak was at elevation of 1513.76' with inflows of .3 kcfs and outflows of 3.2 kcfs. Lower Granite average flows were 16 kcfs, McNary average flows were 151 kcfs, and Bonneville average flows were 145 kcfs.

A question was raised regarding the increase in Dworshak outflows; Steve Hall, COE, reported that a line outage had occurred requiring voltage support from Dworshak and that sometime on 12/11 the project was expected to return to minimum outflows.

TMT members also raised the question of the algorithm used to calculate drafting Libby to 2411' by January 1. As this item was on the agenda for the following day's TMT Year End Review meeting, TMT decided to discuss this item further at that meeting.

Fish: Nothing in addition to chum to report.

Power System: Nothing to report; TMT members reviewed the most recent wind generation data, posted as a link off the TMT homepage. Tony Norris, BPA noted that improvements have been made with regard to wind forecasting and integration.

Water Quality: Laura Hamilton, COE, reported that TDG had been at 98% at the Warrendale gauge for several days.

Other/Announcements: Russ Kiefer, ID, reported that Kokanee redd counts are continuing on a positive trend, and that IDFG is cautiously optimistic regarding increased spawning. Karl Kanbergs reported that two sunken Corps boats in John Day pool had been retrieved. This operation required keeping the pool steady as possible and at intermediate elevations within the allowed pool range.

TMT Schedule: The next meeting will be a **Conference Call at 9 am on 12/23.**

Agenda items will include:

- Notes Review
- Chum Operations
- Operations Review

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Meeting
December 10, 2009**

1. Introduction

Today's TMT meeting was chaired by Dan Feil (COE) and facilitated by Erin Halton (DS Consulting), with representatives of COE, NOAA, BPA, Montana, CRITFC, Idaho, BOR, 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. Review Meeting Minutes for November 18, 2009

There were no changes to the minutes or facilitator's notes today, so both were deemed final.

3. The Dalles Spill Wall Construction Update

Spill wall construction continues to go well, with the leveling slab and block placement completed, Pat Duyck (COE) reported. Of 118 anchors to be installed this year, the contractor has drilled more than 40 anchor holes and has installed 12 anchors. The deviation request allowing for additional water has apparently been effective, and there have been no navigation problems for the contractor's barges. The spill wall completion date was originally set at the end of March, but at the rate work is progressing, it could be the beginning of March if the weather cooperates. Duyck will give TMT another construction update in mid-January.

4. Chum Operations

The first link to this item on today's agenda shows the numbers of chum observed to date in the Ives Island complex, Feil said. There was a bump earlier in December which has leveled off. This year's chum counts are stronger than last year's – 151 fish and 31 redds on December 1, 2009, as compared to 57 fish and 29 redds on December 9, 2008, according to FPC data. However, last year's counts could be misleading, Tony Norris (BPA) cautioned, because surveys during peak run times were canceled due to bad weather.

The second link is the criteria for the chum operation, which remain the same as in past years. Links 3-5 present weekly summaries of the chum operation. During week 2, release of excess water raised the Bonneville tailwater elevation to as much as 15 feet. During week 3, the tailwater elevation rose to 13 feet a few times during nighttime hours only. Throughout week 4, the tailwater elevation remained within the 11.3-11.7-foot criteria. Data for week 5 isn't yet available. Week 5 will reflect the nighttime elevation allowance of up to 16 feet.

BPA has managed to keep the nighttime tailwater elevation below 16 feet despite high energy demands during the cold snap, Norris reported. The effort to keep the tailwater elevation below 16 feet is appreciated, Paul Wagner (NOAA) said. Studies indicate that chum spawning is disrupted by the strong currents associated with flows higher than 16 feet.

Peak spawning will probably occur this week if it hasn't already passed, Wagner said; spawning will continue for awhile. FPC data for past years indicate that peak spawning usually occurs during the first two weeks of December, with activity lasting as late as December 25. To date, 171 live fish have been observed in the Ives Island area, which is more than last year but not as many as in previous years. The COE will continue to post chum spawning summaries as new information is available.

5. Lake Pend Oreille Post-Spawning Operations

The link to this item on today's agenda is a letter to the COE from the Pend Oreille Lake Commission. On December 8, COE and BPA representatives met with local stakeholders and received several comments. The COE is considering the comments and will make a decision regarding this operation when kokanee spawning is complete.

Local stakeholders attending today via phone voiced their concerns:

- Jenny Nixon (Waterfront Property Management) said the action being contemplated is out of compliance with existing regulations and will damage assets on Lake Pend Oreille. It will endanger ice fishermen and recreationalists, create erosion, and cause unintended consequences. Waterfront Property Management believes an EIS is necessary, but at a minimum the impacts need to be assessed before the COE approves BPA's request to raise and lower the lake elevation.
- Linda Mitchell (Pend Oreille Lakes Commission) expressed concern about the impacts of the contemplated action. There has been little public input and no scientific analysis of potential effects; both are urgently needed. Lake elevation changes could exacerbate the spread of invasive species such as flowering rush and milfoil. There are also erosion and fish concerns.
- Charles Wilson (landowner) expressed dismay that an action affecting 110 miles of shoreline isn't going through environmental review while he, a 30-year veteran of the development business, has gone through a two-year EIS process to develop 1,000 feet of waterfront property. Changes in lake elevation will affect rail systems, water lines, docks, pilings, launching ramps, boats, floating homes and ice fishing activities.

The COE will consider these comments and communicate its decision via email or the TMT website sometime within the next few weeks.

6. Snake River Zero-Generation Nighttime Flow

The COE is currently not operating the four lower Snake River dams at zero-generation nighttime flows, Feil said. However, this operation is an option at any time in December through February.

In 2005, the Action Agencies received specific guidance from the Salmon Managers that clarified the criteria for zero-generation nighttime flow, Tony Norris (BPA) recalled. TMT members agreed today that the criteria have been met, i.e. fewer than 100 steelhead and 35 wild steelhead have passed Lower Granite Dam per day for 3 consecutive days. The COE will include these numbers in the fall/winter update of the Water Management Plan, Feil added.

The zero-generation operation will probably be implemented when powerhouse conditions are favorable and it makes sense, Norris said. As usual, BPA will report back to TMT at the end of the year how often the zero generation nighttime flow operation was used to help store water for peak winter loads.

7. Operations Review

a. Reservoirs. Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,281.7 feet. Hungry Horse is at elevation 3,540.40 feet, with discharges of 3-3.1 kcfs.

Libby is at elevation 2,427.2 feet, with inflows of 2.1 kcfs and outflows of 23 kcfs. The plan to draft Libby to a winter control elevation of 2,411 feet by January 1 was mentioned and the discussion deferred to tomorrow at the TMT annual review. Montana wants to avoid a situation like last year, when the Libby reservoir was drafted to 2,411 feet in December, then had trouble refilling because the inflow forecast kept eroding, Brian Marotz said.

Albeni Falls is at elevation 2,051.25 feet, with both inflows and outflows at 8.83 kcfs.

Dworshak is at elevation 1,513.76 feet, with inflows of 0.3 kcfs and outflows of 3.2 kcfs. Paul Wagner asked about the recent uptick in Dworshak outflows. It was mostly due to voltage problems caused by line outage work on the 500-kV Hatway-Dworshak line, Steve Hall (COE) explained. That work is scheduled to continue through December 18.

Daily flow averages are 16 kcfs at Lower Granite, 151 kcfs at McNary, and 125 kcfs at Bonneville.

b. Fish. There was nothing to report as migration season is over.

c. Power System. The cold snap has driven power usage up. Wind power production peaked at 2,504 megawatts when the cold front blew in, then dropped as it usually does during cold spells.

d. Water Quality. Total dissolved gas levels are 96% at Warrendale gage, Laura Hamilton (COE) reported.

9. Other

The latest kokanee redd counts indicate that habitat improvement efforts at Lake Pend Oreille have improved kokanee survival rates, Russ Kiefer (Idaho) reported. Kokanee spawning is still underway; Idaho will declare when it is finished.

Two COE-owned vessels recently sank during high winds and freezing conditions, one in shallow and one in deeper water, Karl Kanbergs reported. There were no major environmental impacts. As part of the attempt to salvage the vessels, the COE has been trying to hold the John Day pool elevation steady at 263 feet. This could impact the Bonneville tailwater elevation for chum but hasn't done so yet.

10. Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled TMT meetings will be conference calls on December 23 and December 30. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Dan Feil	COE
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Doug Baus	COE
Tony Norris	BPA
Brian Marotz	Montana
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Karl Kanbergs	COE
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Russ Kiefer	Idaho
John Roache	BOR
Dave Wills	USFWS
Linda Mitchell	Columbia Basin Commission
Tim Heizenrader	Centaurus
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Pat Duyck	COE
Holli Krebs	JC Morgan
Rob Allerman	Deutsch Bank
Rob Diaz	Integral Renewables

Tom Le	Puget Sound Energy
Ralph XX	Waterfront Property Management
Charles Wilson	Landowner, Lake Pend Oreille
Richelle Beck	DRA
Jason Flory	USFWS Spokane
Jenny Nixon	Waterfront Property Management
Jeff Laufle	COE
Laura Hamilton	COE
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