

# COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

## TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

March 10, 2010 Conference Call

### FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES

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.

#### **Chum Emergence Update**

Paul Wagner, NOAA, directed TMT to temperature data, posted as a link to the agenda. He began by reminding TMT that the Water Supply Forecast, relative to chum emergence, is well below average this year as there has been little precipitation in the basin. He also detailed the readings of three gauges designed to measure chum emergence data. Gauges one and two indicated that emergence was underway and gauge three indicated that there is still a few days to a week left to go as the targeted 825 had not yet been reached. Wagner stated that NOAA recognizes that providing water for chum borrows from the spring/summer water supply, putting spring migration at risk. Given the need to balance water needs, NOAA proposed relaxing the protection that has been in place for the chum population by using the following step-wise approach:

- Effective on 0001 hours on Monday, March 15, 2010, operate Bonneville Dam to maintain a minimum Bonneville tailwater elevation of 11.0 feet.
- Effective on 0001 hours on Wednesday, March 17, 2010, operate Bonneville Dam to maintain a minimum Bonneville tailwater elevation of 10.8 feet.
- Effective 0001 Hours on Friday, March 19, 2010, operate Bonneville Dam to maintain a minimum Bonneville tailwater elevation of 10.5 feet.
- Effective 0001 hours on Monday, March 22, 2010, transition to Vernita Bar minimum operations and the tailwater elevation that provides.

Wagner explained that the reason for the incremental step down is that chum move vertically and will hopefully respond to the stepped-down water levels by migrating out of the area. He added that if precipitation conditions change, TMT will need to revisit the specifics of the operation.

John Roache, BOR, Tony Norris, BPA, and Steve Barton, COE, thanked Wagner for his work and agreed with the decision but requested to hear from the other salmon managers on the issue. Positions were as follows:

- Charles Morrill, WDFW: support the NOAA proposal as it seems to be the most reasonable approach.
- Dave Wills, USFWS: no objection to the NOAA proposal.
- Russ Kiefer, ID: support the NOAA proposal as written.

- Deanne Pavlick-Kunkel, Spokane Tribe: no objection.
- Kyle Dittmer, CRITFIC: support the NOAA proposal as written.

**Action/Next Steps:** The NOAA proposal will be implemented as stated above. This item will be revisited at the next TMT meeting on 3/17.

### **Water Supply Forecast NWRFC**

Steve Barton, COE, provided water supply updates per the March final forecasts produced by the COE and the River Forecast Center: Grand Coulee 75% of normal, The Dalles 67% of normal, Lower Granite 56% of normal, Libby 80% of normal and Dworshak 59% of normal. Karl Kanbergs, COE, reported that precipitation so far for March is at 75% of average. Barton noted that there has not been a lot of movement in flood control elevations. He added that the Initial Control Flow has been lowered to 200 kcfs. Dave Wills, USFWS, asked why the COE and NWRFC percentage data differs from each other; Barton answered that the agencies use different models and variables and there are differences in how they weigh observed precipitation and snow on the ground.

**Action/Next Steps:** Updates on Weather and Water Supply Forecasts will continue to be discussed at all TMT meetings in the near future.

### **Draft 2010 Fish Operations Plan**

Dan Feil, COE, directed TMT to the Draft 2010 Spring Fish Operations Plan, posted as a link to the agenda. He noted that for the most part the document is consistent with the 2009 court-ordered operations. The document has been distributed to TMT and RIOG for review and will be finalized Friday 3/12 or early next week when it will be sent to the court for approval. Feil reviewed for TMT the various topics and subjects covered in the document. He touched specifically on Transport Operations, Spill Projects and detailed the few operations that are different from 2009 operations: the low-flow operations, the McNary ESB screen installation dates, and the bulk spill pattern to be used in 2010 at Lower Monumental Dam. Feil said that the COE expects to receive a court order shortly after submitting the draft FOP to the court.

**Action/Next Steps:** TMT members are invited to review the draft document and email or call Dan Feil with any significant, substantive comments by noon on Friday 3/12.

### **B2 Corner Collector Operation**

Dan Feil, COE, reminded TMT that the 2010 March kelt operation at Bonneville has been a topic of ongoing discussion at FPOM. The current operation follows the trigger criteria recommended by FPOM with one addition as follows:

- 2 kelts observed on two consecutive days (met this weekend) and a cumulative 20 total fish observed in the Juvenile Bypass System (so far there have been eight).
- Within 14 hours of the trigger being met, the B2 corner collector (B2CC) will be opened.
- If upon opening the B2CC, TDG exceeds 105% at the Warrendale fixed monitoring station, the B2CC will be closed.
- The project will then switch to a BI powerhouse operating priority until April 1

- On April 1, when the TDG waiver becomes effective, the B2CC will then be turned back on and operate through the spring season. Powerhouse priority will also switch back the BII powerhouse on April 1 (Scott Bettin noted one exception; on 4/10 there will be a B2CC outage for approximately 10 hours).

### **TMT Schedule**

(NOTE: TMT will likely meet weekly during the month of March.)

**The next TMT meeting will be:** face to face on 3/17 at 9:00am and will be **held at NOAA in the St. Helens room, 10<sup>th</sup> floor.**

Agenda items will include:

- Notes Review
- The Dalles Spillwall Update
- Updated Weather and Flood Control Forecasts
- Water Management Plan Spring/ Comment Deadlines
- Chum Emergence Update
- 2010 Operations
- 2010 Initial Spill Priority List
- Transport Update
- Hanford Reach
- Operations Review

**Columbia River Regional Forum  
Technical Management Team Conference Call  
March 10, 2010**

**1. Introduction**

Today's TMT call was chaired by Steve Barton (COE) and facilitated by Erin Halton (DS Consulting) with representatives of the COE, BPA, USFWS, NOAA, Idaho, Washington, the Spokane Tribe, CRITFC and others present. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should provide them to the TMT chair or bring them to the next meeting.

**2. Chum Emergence Update**

Water supply data still indicates this will be a year of below-average flows, Paul Wagner (NOAA) reported. Chum emergence data show that Gages 1 and 2 have hit 825 temperature units, a relative estimate of when emergence should happen. Based on trends, it's hard to justify continuing to provide chum flows until March 10, so at this point NOAA recommends a step-down process that will gradually lower the Bonneville tailwater elevation in light of dwindling water supplies. The proposed chum flow schedule is as follows:

1. Effective on 0001 hours on Monday, March 15, 2010, operate Bonneville Dam to maintain a minimum Bonneville tailwater elevation of 11.0 feet.
2. Effective on 0001 hours on Wednesday, March 17, 2010, operate Bonneville Dam to maintain a minimum Bonneville tailwater elevation of 10.8 feet.
3. Effective 0001 Hours on Friday, March 19, 2010, operate Bonneville Dam to maintain a minimum Bonneville tailwater elevation of 10.5 feet.
4. Effective 0001 hours on Monday, March 22, 2010, transition to Vernita Bar minimum operations and the tailwater elevation that provides.

The reason for the gradual step-down is anecdotal evidence that chum move vertically in the water column, and such a schedule could allow them time to adapt to diminishing flows. If precipitation changes dramatically in the near future, NOAA might revise its recommendation. Stakeholders gave their views of the NOAA proposal (Oregon and Montana were absent today).

**BPA** – In favor.

**BOR** – In favor.

**WDFW** – A tough decision but the right call.

**USFWS** – Agrees with WDFW's position.

**Idaho** – No objection.

**CRITFC** – Supports NOAA's proposal.

**Spokane Tribe** – Supports NOAA's proposal.

The chum tailwater restriction will therefore end at 1 minute past midnight on March 22, barring a sudden change in water supplies. TMT will revisit this issue at its next meeting March 17.

### ***3. Updated Water Supply and Flood Control Forecasting***

There has been no significant change in the water supply forecasts since the last meeting, Barton reported. The RFC's March final forecasts are out:

- Grand Coulee – January-July volume: 75% of normal.
- The Dalles – 67% of normal, a drop of 2% from the early bird forecast.
- Lower Granite – April-July volume: 56% of normal.

The COE's final forecasts for March are also out:

- Libby – April-August: 70% of normal, or 5084 kaf, down from 5,478 kaf according to the February final forecast.
- Dworshak – 59% of normal, or 1,571 kaf for April-July, down from 1,742 kaf according to the February final forecast.

Flood control elevations are slightly higher at Libby, Dworshak, and Hungry Horse than they were in February, Barton reported. The Grand Coulee flood control elevation of 1,283.3 feet for March-April hasn't changed. The initial controlled flow – the estimated peak discharge, given the volume forecast, if no dams were present – is now down to 200 kcfs, a reflection of the deteriorating water supply forecast. Dave Wills (USFWS) asked about differences between the COE and RFC predictions, particularly for Dworshak Dam. That has to do with differences in how the two models treat and weigh observed snow and precipitation, Barton replied.

### ***4. Draft 2010 Fish Operations Plan***

The draft 2010 FOP is now posted to the TMT web page for review, Dan Feil (COE) said. It is mostly consistent with spring 2009 operations per the court order, covering operations from April 3 to June 20, 2010. Operations not covered in the FOP can be found in the 2008 BiOp, the current Water Management Plan, or the current Fish Passage Plan. The WMP and FPP are both up to date, posted to the TMT website.

For the most part, the 2010 FOP is a rollover of court-ordered operations for 2009. The document covers spill operations, TDG management, minimum generation at the projects, low flow operations, juvenile fish transportation plans, a project-by-project description of research activities that could affect spill, and operational considerations for each project.

The 2010 transport operation is identical to last year for flows above 65 kcfs, with a start date from April 20-May 1 at Lower Granite and subsequent start dates of 4 and 7 days later at Little Goose and Lower Monumental, respectively. If seasonal flows are less than 65 kcfs, NOAA proposed a maximum transport operation beginning May 1 at Lower Granite, with subsequent start dates 7 days later at Little Goose and Lower Monumental.

Under the 2010 FOP, transportation will occur April 3-June 20 at the Snake River projects; April 10-June 19 at Columbia River projects; April 10-end June at John Day and The Dalles dams; and April 10-June 20 at Bonneville Dam. These dates are identical to last year.

There are a few differences from last year, starting with the low-flow transport operation proposed by NOAA. On March 12, ISAB will review NOAA's proposal for seasonal flows of less than 65 kcfs. The COE will then make a determination on transport operations if flows are less than 65 kcfs at Lower Granite – which there's every indication they will be.

Another difference this year will be delayed installation of fish screens (from April 1 to April 15) at McNary Dam for the benefit of juvenile lamprey. Yet another change from the 2009 operation is that Lower Monumental Dam will use only a bulk spill pattern in 2010. Last year's research on uniform vs. bulk spill indicated that dam survival is slightly higher with bulk spill.

Once the FOP has been finalized and approved by the court, it will be posted to the TMT page as appendix E of the Fish Passage Plan. Send substantive (not editorial) comments on the FOP to Feil by noon March 12.

### ***5. Bonneville 2<sup>nd</sup> Powerhouse Corner Collector Operation for Kelts***

The March kelt operation of the Bonneville corner collector has been under discussion for some time, Feil reported. The operational trigger developed in FPOM to open the B2CC has been slightly modified. In 2010 the B2CC will be opened when 2 kelts have been observed on 2 consecutive days, plus a total of 20 fish observed at the Bonneville 2<sup>nd</sup> powerhouse behavioral guidance structure.

With 2 kelts already seen in the area, the plan is to open the corner collector within 14 hours of observing 20 fish at the BGS. Until April 1, exceedances of 105% TDG saturation at the Warrandale gage will cause the corner collector to be shut off and the project to operate with a 1<sup>st</sup> powerhouse priority for the rest of March. The reason for this is operation of the corner collector can cause TDG levels at the Warrandale gage to rise, and the state waiver allowing levels to exceed 105% TDG doesn't kick in until April 1.

Scott Bettin (BPA) noted that the corner collector could be shut down for 10 hours on April 10 for maintenance, the subject of an upcoming FPOM discussion. There will be a Spring Creek Hatchery release on April 12, Dave Wills said. There is no longer a March release due to hatchery reprogramming.

## **6. Next Meeting**

The next TMT meeting will be at NOAA's Portland office on March 17. The agenda will include updates on the water management issues discussed today, The Dalles spill wall construction, the Water Management Plan spring/summer update, the 2010 spill priority list, transport operations, protection flows at Hanford Reach, and the usual operations review. This summary prepared by technical writer Pat Vivian.

<b><i>Name</i></b>	<b><i>Affiliation</i></b>
Dan Feil	COE
Dennis XX	Seattle City Light
Tony Norris	BPA
Steve Hall	COE Walla Walla
Irene XX	Puget Sound Energy
Richelle Beck	DRA
Greg Lawson	Pt. Carver
Shane Scott	PPC
Dave Wills	USFWS
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
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Charles Morrill	WDFW
Tom XX	CMDC Power
Deanne Kunkel	Spokane Tribe
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