

# COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

## TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

March 24, 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, reported to TMT that there was a field visit Friday 3/19 and one scheduled for 3/24 to confirm/observe connectivity between Hamilton Creek and the Columbia River. Wagner noted that with the tailwater elevation at 10.5, the protected Ives Island area is dry and much has been dewatered. There is no flow over the control point area and it has been disconnected with the river. However, Hamilton Creek is well connected to the Columbia River and there is good egress from the creek to the Lower Columbia. There were no questions/comments from TMT members.

#### **Bonneville Powerhouse 2 Corner Collector (B2CC) Update**

Steve Barton, COE, recalled the operation discussed at the 3/17 TMT meeting, when the B2CC was open around the clock. Barton reported that the operation held through the weekend until 1300 hours on Monday afternoon 3/22, when the Warrendale gauge was reporting TDG at 110% for about 8-9 hours (peak level was 111.1%). The following morning, Tuesday 3/23, TDG levels were 1% higher than where they were the previous morning so the decision was made to close the corner collector due to the continued exceedances. Barton said that TDG has come down to 104.2% saturation (below state standards) and added that the latest instructions given to the project staff were to perform a daily on/off operation between 0600 and 1300 hrs. However, due to excessive winds, it is not possible to open the corner collector today. A crane and rigging crew is required to open and close the corner collector and to assure safety of the crew, and it cannot be opened or closed when the wind exceeds 15mph. As the forecast is calling for continued high wind, the corner collector will remain closed until the winds subside.

The COE asked TMT members for comment/suggestions; the group discussed the probability of gas levels rising again as well as options surrounding manipulating attraction waters. Paul Wagner, NOAA, noted that while the corner collector operations are beneficial for kelt passage, adult attraction flows in the sluiceway are desirable if the corner collector is closed. Cindy LeFleur, WDFW, asked if there was a problem with turning the attraction flows on and off; Wagner clarified that no, as adults tend to approach the project in the morning hours there is not much value added by turning on the corner collector in the afternoon. Tom Lorz, CRITFC, added that running attraction flows at first light would be optimal and that the ideal operation would be to run the corner collector at night and adult attraction flows during the day, as kelt pass all day.

Wagner stated that from the Salmon Manager's perspective, the most desirable operation would be to keep the corner collector open around the clock; however, if wind continues to be an issue, then the preference would be to run the adult attraction flows in the morning.

Steve Barton clarified that if conditions allow, the COE will re-open the corner collector and some amount of wind/precipitation will likely help TDG levels stay down and support continuous B2CC operations. Barton noted that the forecast calls for moderate winds but a break in the weather is expected; he suggested that until weather permits the B2CC to be opened, adult attraction flows could run through spillbay gates 1 and 18.

**Action/Next Steps:** The COE will move forward with the above short-term plan and TDG levels will be closely monitored. Tom Lorz, CRITFC, said that he would make an effort to convene an FPOM call on this issue. The COE will share any operational changes or updates with TMT members via email.

### **Lower Snake River Drafting to MOP**

Steve Barton, COE, reviewed the planned operation to draft the Snake River to MOP by April 3<sup>rd</sup>, per the BiOp and the FOP. Paul Wagner, NOAA, shared that the MOP operation was discussed at the 3/23 FPAC meeting; he said the Salmon Managers had considered whether it would be beneficial to defer drafting until a later date in April, when more juvenile migrants are likely to be present in the river. At the moment, there are not very many fish present, but Salmon Managers suggested that is due to the low flow conditions and if a bump in flows were to pass through, fish presence would also rise.

TMT members discussed the timing going into the first few days of April and what would be required to coordinate a change to the April 3 date specified in the Fish Operations Plan. The Salmon Managers asked if a recommendation could be shared on 3/30 at noon, after the FPAC meeting (when more FPAC members will be present to coordinate the recommendation.) Steve Barton, COE, stated that felt that the March 31<sup>st</sup> date was cutting it close, and noted that any recommended changes to the operation's date need to be vetted with the COE's legal team, as they relate to both the FOP and the BiOp.

Russ Kiefer, ID, shared that, given the low water year, delaying the draft to MOP could be beneficial to fish and added that a trigger(s) should be determined that would work well for fish and for the Action Agency process associated with drafting to MOP. Cindy LeFleur, WDFW, asked whether full TMT consensus would be necessary to effect a change to the draft date; again, Barton said he would need to consult with the COE's legal team. Barton asked the Salmon Managers if, by correlation to a recommendation to change to the MOP draft date, they would also recommend a delay the initiation of spill (scheduled for April 10 and also a FOP/BiOP specified operation. Tom Lorz, CRITFC, noted that given the current litigation, he suspects that TMT is not able to make the final call and that an SOR may be necessary. Tony Norris, BPA, noted that the April 3<sup>rd</sup> MOP date has been set for some time and that modifying that date is an issue as an operational change would take 2-3 days to for BPA to coordinate. Given the time constraint, he

suggested the default be to operate with the understanding that drafting to MOP will occur on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The COE suggested an alternative to consider would be to fill to slightly above MOP and provide a “pulse” of flow when fish are present; this alternative would still meet the currently planned draft to MOP date and therefore wouldn’t call the operation into legal question. Jim Litchfield, MT, agreed that push water through when fish are present, but added concern for any up/down patterned operation. Barton stated that any recommendation needs to be made as soon as possible and reiterated that the intention is to do what is best for fish. Rick Kruger, OR, noted that Oregon will not support delaying spill but are open to considering a delay to the draft to MOP date. Russ Kiefer, ID, noted some concern for making conditions any worse than they already are, but said he could consider the pulsing idea, as it might help keep fish moving during this low water year.

All agreed that the recommendation to change the draft to MOP date, if there is to be one, need to be made quickly; Barton reminded TMT that consulting with the COE’s legal team will likely dictate whether a change to the date is possible, even with an SOR and consensus amongst TMT members. Wagner reiterated that it may not be possible to gather input on a recommendation from all FPAC members until noon on Tuesday 3/30, but that every effort would be made to convene the group as soon as possible.

**Action/Next Steps:** Barton will discuss the issue with the COE’s legal department to confirm what kind of consensus is required to effect a change to the April 3<sup>rd</sup> date. Barton will communicate their response to Wagner as soon as it is known. Coordination amongst FPAC members will be ongoing between now and early next week. In the meantime, drafting to MOP on April 3<sup>rd</sup> will be the default operation. In the event that a TMT call needs to be convened before the 3/31 scheduled meeting, notification will be shared via email.

**The next TMT meeting will be:** face to face on 3/31 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
- Updated Weather and Flood Control Forecasts
- Chum Surveys re Connectivity
- 2010 Operations
- Spill Priority List/ Emergency Actions
- TDG Instances/ Definition Changes
- Priest Rapids Update
- Operations Review

**Columbia River Regional Forum  
Technical Management Team Conference Call  
March 24, 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, Montana, Washington, BOR, CRITFC, NOAA, Oregon, Idaho 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**

Paul Wagner (NOAA) reported that on March 19, with a tailwater elevation of 10.5 feet below Bonneville Dam, field visits found the spawning area that had been protected by the minimum tailwater elevation for chum emergence is now completely dry and disconnected from the Columbia River. Hamilton Creek, however, has remained connected to the Columbia River, with adequate flows for passage despite the low elevation. That will be verified today via another field visit.

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

The COE has kept the B2CC open 24/7, operating powerhouse 2 as the priority, with the sluiceway and adult attraction flows turned off in bays 1 and 18 per TMT's discussion at the March 17 meeting. That operation continued through the weekend, Barton reported.

On the afternoon of March 22, TDG levels at the Warrandale gage hit 111.1%, exceeding the state standard of 110% for 8-9 hours. Gas levels the next morning rose another 1% so the COE closed the B2CC at 1 pm, March 23.

The Warrandale gage read 112.8% TDG saturation at the time the B2CC was closed. Gas levels since then have receded, so the plan was to reopen the B2CC again at 7 am today. However, winds above 15 mph in the Columbia Gorge are making it unsafe for project personnel to operate the crane needed to reopen the corner collector. The COE will continue to evaluate the situation, which raises questions about the viability of an on-off B2CC operation for kelts to conserve water, given that the gorge is often windy. It doesn't look like the COE will be able to open the B2CC today, but project staff will touch base with COE staff at 11 am and decide whether to make another attempt.

TMT's focus turned to operation of the sluiceway and adult attraction flows while the B2CC stays closed. Barton asked the salmon managers for their views of the attraction flow and sluiceway operation. Comments also touched on the B2CC operation itself. There may be an opportunity to reopen the B2CC and see

how it operates under windy conditions, he said. Perhaps the B2CC will be able to operate continuously without violating state water quality standards if the wind persists. USFWS and Oregon were not represented in this discussion today.

- **NOAA** – In the absence of the B2CC operation for kelts, it's desirable to operate the sluiceway and provide adult attraction flows in the morning, when they are most valuable to fish. The best plan once the B2CC is open is to keep it open as long as gas doesn't become an issue.
- **CRITFC** – Suggested operating the B2CC at night and shutting it down in the morning, when attraction flows are turned on for adults. Also favored keeping the B2CC open and monitoring TDG levels to see whether windy conditions over the next few days sufficiently strip the gas out of the river.
- **Washington** – Expressed interest in the idea of turning attraction flows on and off as needed.
- **BPA** – If windy conditions are predicted by afternoon, don't open the B2CC that day, just provide attraction flows.
- **Idaho** – No comments.

There was general agreement to reopen the B2CC as soon as conditions allow, with continued monitoring of gas levels. Windy weather is expected tomorrow and throughout the weekend which would help keep TDG levels down. TMT will be informed of the status of the B2CC operation via email until the next TMT meeting March 31.

#### ***4. Dropping to MOP on the Lower Snake River***

The COE's default operating plan for the lower Snake projects, absent a recommendation otherwise, is to draft Lower Granite Dam to MOP by April 3 and maintain a tailwater elevation of 633-634 feet at Little Goose Dam, not a MOP+1 or MOP+2 operation, Barton said. TMT discussed this operation at its last meeting March 17.

FPAC discussed the MOP issue yesterday and favors deferring the draft until later in April when there will be more juvenile migrants in the river, Wagner said. Drafting a project for 24 hours creates a significant bump in flows that could amount to a simulated mini-freshet. For example, drafting flows of 25 kcfs at Lower Granite for 24 hours would increase flow volume by 50% and provide a 12 kcfs bump. FPAC was uncertain when the best time in April would be for such a bump, and is aware that deviating from the April 3 start date specified in the FOP could be a procedural challenge. FPAC finally deferred its decision to March 31 in hopes of having a more fully developed strategy by then.

In the meantime, Barton said he would check with the COE office of legal counsel on what the requirements would be for coordinating a deviation from the FOP and the BiOp by delaying MOP and spill this year. He asked TMT to consider delaying the start of spill along with the start of MOP, and TMT members expressed their views. USFWS was not represented in this exchange.

- **Idaho** – Delaying MOP this year would benefit fish by giving the first wave of migrants a little push down the Snake in a dry year. Recognizes the need for a more definitive operation in terms of dates the water should be released.
- **Washington** – Wants to further investigate the option of delaying MOP past the beginning of spill.
- **COE** – Other operations should be timed for when fish will get the most benefit. If it's advantageous to delay MOP, it may be advantageous to delay spill as well. Favors pulses as a way to move fish down the river while conserving water. Pulses wouldn't necessarily delay the draft to MOP or call the spill operation into question.
- **CRITFC** – Whether or not it makes sense to delay spill along with MOP is an AFEP issue. Given the BiOp litigation, it's doubtful that TMT could make a decision on this unless all parties agree, and not all parties are present today.
- **BPA** – Agrees with CRITFC that this is not just TMT's decision. The same logic applies to both MOP and spill operations, which are date-set in the FOP that was submitted to the judge. Given the time constraints on coordinating a change of the FOP with the court, one possibility is to fill above MOP now and draft the excess out later when more fish are present. Drafting to MOP and spilling, then drafting again, could buy some time to deal with the procedural challenge of deviating from the FOP. If MOP is delayed past April 10, the water will be spilled in the lower Columbia and not in the Snake.
- **Montana** – It makes sense in a bad water year to store above MOP and use the water to help get fish out to the ocean. However, Montana is strongly opposed to an operation that would cause elevations to rise and fall. Believes these fluctuations would also represent a deviation from the FOP and should be reported to the court even if FOP-specified dates are met. TMT involvement alone isn't sufficient to justify the deviation.
- **Idaho** – Has considered delaying the start of spill, but is reluctant to make conditions worse for early migrants in a bad year. Willing to consider, however, whether the overall benefits to fish would outweigh the adverse impacts. Also willing to consider pulses to keep fish moving.
- **NOAA** – Advocated waiting to begin the MOP operation until FPAC can discuss the issue again on March 30.
- **Oregon** – Willing to delay the start of MOP, but is strongly opposed to delaying the start of spill.

The COE and BPA agreed that a decisive plan is needed by March 29 at the latest in order to set up water movement on the river accordingly. After March 29 it will be more difficult, but not impossible, to alter the plan. Barton will clarify the procedural requirements involved in a FOP deviation. Wagner will try to set up an FPAC conference call on March 26, with a goal of drafting an SOR that proposes a specific operation for the lower Snake projects. BPA and NOAA

agreed that if water is to be moved before March 30, it would be preferable to draft from Ice Harbor first and move up the river.

### **5. Next Meeting**

The next TMT meeting will be at NOAA's Portland office on March 31. This summary prepared by technical writer Pat Vivian.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Tony Norris	BPA
Alex XX	Grant PUD
Doug Baus	COE
Steve Hall	COE
Steve Barton	COE
Cindy Lefleur	Washington
Barry Espenson	CBB
Glen Trager	Shell Energy
Richelle Beck	DRA
Tom Le	Puget Sound Energy
John Hart	EWEB
Greg Lawson	Pt. Carver
Rob Allerman	Deutschbank
John Roache	BOR
Laura Hamilton	COE
Tom Lorz	CRITFC
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Rick Kruger	Oregon
Scott Bettin	BPA
Tim Heizenrader	Centaurus
Shane Scott	PPC
Rob Dies	Iberdrola Renewables
Russ Kiefer	Idaho