

# COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

August 25, 2010 Meeting

## FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES

Facilitator: Erin Halton

Notes: Robin Gumpert

The following notes are a summary of issues discussed at today's meeting. These notes are intended to be a reminder for TMT members of the issues raised and actions to be taken.

### Meeting Minutes

The 8/11, 8/13 and 8/16 Official Minutes and Facilitator Notes had been posted. The following revisions were made:

- 8/11 Facilitator Notes: Re: Dworshak Operations, a sentence was added that "FPAC members present were in support of the COE proposal"
- 8/13 Facilitator Notes: Under Members Present, all state representatives will be associated with their respective state rather than the agency they work for.
- 8/16 Facilitator Notes: Under TMT feedback re: Dworshak Operations, the Washington comment, remove: "revisit as needed to ensure target 1535' elevation will be met."

With the above changes, all notes under review were considered final.

### Dworshak Operations

The COE provided a temperature link and latest model run for Dworshak operations. Steve Hall, Walla Walla District, clarified that the model run showed the transition from full powerhouse down to 8 kcfs (not "plus" 8 kcfs as was labeled on the graph). He shared that with the cooler temperatures in the system, the COE expected that Lower Granite temperatures would remain at around 65°F even with the operational change. This operation would signify the COE's transition from temperature management to water management. While the model depicted the change on 8/26, this week's modeling and TMT feedback would influence the COE's final decision on when to transition to 8 kcfs. Paul Wagner, NOAA, on behalf of FPAC, said the model and proposed operation looked fine.

Steve Barton, COE, also reported that the COE's current plan for September operations reflected the Nez Perce recommendation, using a two-day step down approach to reach elevation 1520': from 8 kcfs to 5.9 kcfs on 9/13, down to 4.7 kcfs on 9/15 and 2.4 kcfs on 9/17, then holding until the project reached its target 1520' elevation (anticipated to be 9/18-19<sup>th</sup>) at which time the project would operate at minimum discharges. During the September operations, temperatures are likely to stay within the 46-48°F range.

Again, TMT members did not object to this proposed operation. Russ Kiefer, Idaho, noted that the cool wet spring provided good conditions for summer operations this year.

**Action/Next Steps:** The COE planned to operate Dworshak for the rest of August and into September per the plans described above. If a change is needed before the next scheduled meeting (9/8 conference call), the COE will notify TMT via email and/or convene an unscheduled meeting as appropriate.

### **End of MOP Operations**

Steve Barton, COE, shared that per the Fish Operations Plan (FOP), the four Lower Snake projects will be released from MOP operations restrictions beginning at midnight on 8/31. The action agencies will take the same approach that was used in 2009 and that TMT members agreed worked very well as a way to meet both needs for operating flexibility and moving flow augmentation water downstream. Using a step-wise approach, end of MOP will start with the lowest project and move up, and, MOP will be maintained as a soft constraint during the flow augmentation period. While this may result in the Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, and Little Goose projects being above MOP during the first couple weeks of September, these projects would be drafted back to the MOP range when Dworshak reached elevation 1520. This would achieve the objective of not using Dworshak augmentation water to refill the lower Snake River projects. Tony Norris, BPA, added that BPA acknowledged Lower Granite in particular should be held close to MOP, as an important project for flow and temperature (the upper reaches of Lower Granite pool are critical for steelhead and fall Chinook that are over wintering.) Paul Wagner, NOAA, said the Salmon Managers were fine with the plan and expressed appreciation for the Action Agencies' consideration of the desire to ensure and show the 200 KAF augmentation water releases through the system.

### **SOR 2010 C-8 Autumn Treaty Fishing**

Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, reported that the first Autumn Treaty Fishery for 2010 was underway, and that an SOR had been submitted to the COE requesting that the pools at Bonneville, John Day and The Dalles be held within a 1.5' band during the fishing periods 8/24-27, 8/30-9/3 and 9/7-9/10. He added that net flight information would be shared with the COE following this TMT meeting. The COE responded that they will issue guidance to operate the projects as requested, noting that the 8/30-9/3 fishery week coincides with a system transition period to fall targets for flow augmentation and fish operations. While this may pose a challenge, the COE committed to doing its best to keep the pools within the range stated in the SOR. (\*NOTE: TMT discussed other system impacts on the treaty fishery during today's meeting. See 'Operations Review/Reservoirs' notes below for that summary.)

### **Water Quality Report**

Scott English and Laura Hamilton, COE, shared the July TDG report and noted a total of 20 instances for the month. Scott touched on two brief exceedances due to gauge issues (quickly fixed by USGS) and three exceedances at Bonneville related to operations; he also shared that a tailwater station at Ice Harbor had been vandalized and was now corrected.

## **Operations Review**

**Reservoirs:** John Roache, Reclamation, and Steve Barton, COE, reported on their agencies' respective projects. Grand Coulee was at elevation 1279.9' and targeting 1277.3' by 8/31. Hungry Horse was at elevation 3549.82' with 3.9 kcfs outflows. Libby was operating with 6.6 kcfs inflows and 7.0 kcfs outflows (bull trout minimums), and was at elevation 2442.64' (Libby had reached its maximum elevation for the season). Albeni Falls was passing 11 kcfs inflows and was at elevation 2062.19'. Dworshak was operating at .9 kcfs inflows and 10.3 kcfs out, currently at elevation 1541.83'. Lower Granite outflows were 28 kcfs (last week's average was 29.9 kcfs); Priest Rapids outflows were 93 kcfs (last week's average was 86.8 kcfs); and McNary outflows were 107.2 kcfs (last week's average was 126.8 kcfs).

Barton reported that forebay restrictions were in place at McNary to enable a body recovery effort, and a request had been sent from BPA to fill at John Day what was drafted from McNary. This may result in John Day reservoir's elevation slightly exceeding the BiOp summer time operating range of 262.5 to 264 feet. The Autumn Treaty fishery and weekend McNary spill levels might be impacted by this effort, though the COE thought it was unlikely. Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, suggested that morning and evenings (6pm-8pm) were the most vulnerable times for the treaty fishers so recommended that changes to the John Day project not be made during those times, to the extent possible. Paul Wagner, NOAA, stated a preference that spill at Bonneville be maintained as best as possible during this time.

**Fish:** Paul Wagner, NOAA, gave a fish status update. Adult fall chinook counts at Bonneville were 4,000/day and steelhead numbers were 2,500-3,500/day. Wild steelhead numbers were up but overall totals were not quite as high as 2009. Sockeye counts at Lower Granite were 2,154, a new record. Steelhead numbers were high at Lower Granite and fall Chinook were just arriving. Subyearling fall chinook numbers were on a steady decline at Lower Granite and Lower Monumental; counts at McNary were 8,000/day.

**Power:** Nothing to report

## **Next TMT Meetings:**

### **September 8 - Conference Call**

Agenda items will include:

- Dworshak Operations
- Autumn Treaty Fishing Update/SOR

### **September 15 - Face to Face**

Agenda items will include:

- Review Minutes
- Dworshak Operations
- Draft WMP
- Operations Review
- Other?

**Columbia River Regional Forum**  
**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM OFFICIAL MINUTES**

**August 25, 2010**

Notes: Pat Vivian

**1. Introduction**

Today's TMT meeting was chaired by Steve Barton (COE) and facilitated by Erin Halton (DS Consulting). Representatives of the COE, Washington, NOAA, BPA, BOR, Idaho, Oregon, CRITFC and others attended. This summary is an official record of the proceedings, not a verbatim transcript. Anyone with questions or comments about this summary should give them to the TMT chair or bring them to the next meeting.

**2. Review Meeting Minutes for August 11, 13 and 16, 2010**

Halton highlighted two substantive edits to the facilitator's notes:

- August 11 facilitator's notes, Dworshak operations: Russ Kiefer (Idaho) added a sentence at the top of page 2 describing the two conference calls TMT scheduled on August 13 and 16 to check in on Dworshak.
- August 16 facilitator's notes, Dworshak operations: Charlie Morrill (Washington) deleted "...revisit as needed to ensure the target 1,535 elevation will be met," so the statement says, "Washington supports this operation."

With these changes, the facilitator's notes and official minutes for August 11, 13 and 16 were all deemed final.

**3. Dworshak Operations and Temperature Modeling**

Temperatures at Lower Granite tailwater have remained below 66 degrees F, Barton reported. Steve Hall (COE Walla Walla) showed TMT the latest temperature modeling results in attachment 3b, which depicts a draft plan that's similar to last year's operation.

The model shows Dworshak outflows at full powerhouse, transitioning down to 8 kcfs outflows on August 26-27 as the operation moves toward elevation 1,535 feet on August 31. Barton pointed out that the title heading is misleading and should just say "8k after the 26<sup>th</sup>." Past then, the plan is to

maintain 8 kcfs discharges until approximately September 11, then drop to 5.9 kcfs (1 big unit) for a minimum of 2 days, drop again to 4.7 kcfs (2 small units) for another 2 days, then to 2.4 kcfs (1 small unit) until elevation 1,520 feet is attained, estimated to be on or about 19 September based on current models. At that time, flows will drop to minimums of about 1.5 kcfs. This plan devised by the Dworshak Board is close to being ready for comments. Russ Kiefer (Idaho) commented today that it looks like a good end-of-season operation in preparation for September flow augmentation.

TMT will revisit Dworshak operations at its next conference call on September 8. The COE will email TMT members regarding any changes made to the draft plan before then.

#### ***4. End of MOP Operations***

The COE is planning to issue instructions for the four lower Snake projects regarding the end of MOP operations, scheduled at midnight on August 31, Barton said. This year's proposed end of MOP operation is essentially the same as last year's. It incorporates the preference expressed last year for refilling the projects starting from down-river and moving up. The action agencies will take the same approach that was used in 2009, and that TMT members agreed worked very well, as a way to meet both needs for operating flexibility and moving flow augmentation water from Dworshak downstream. When MOP ends August 31, the COE will release forebay restrictions and allowing forebays to operate within their normal ranges, with the exception of the extra half-foot allowance at Ice Harbor and Little Goose for navigation concerns.

This proposed end of MOP operation has been reviewed and approved by FPAC, Paul Wagner (NOAA) said. He thanked the COE for including the Nez Perce request and to move the water downstream in order to assure the release of the 200 kaf entitlement in September.

The bottom-up refill operation and attempt to move augmentation water downstream is a soft constraint, Tony Norris (BPA) noted. Management of the Lower Granite pool has been identified by the Dworshak board as critical because it's particularly sensitive to thermal warming. Lower Granite will likely operate within or near MOP restrictions this year during refill, Norris said

TMT will revisit the end of MOP operations during its next conference call September 8.

#### ***5. Autumn Treaty Fishing SOR 2010-C-8***

This SOR requests that the three lower Columbia pools be operated within a 1.5-foot band as a hard constraint from 6 am to 6 pm August 24-27, August 30-September 3, and September 7-10. Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) said additional treaty

fishing is expected in September. Expected escapement numbers for this year are 483,000 chinook and 499,000 steelhead at Bonneville Dam.

The COE will issue guidance to operate the projects as requested. Barton cautioned, however, that the period from August 30-Sept 3 is especially volatile as the hydro system shifts from fish operations to meeting fall elevation targets. It “doesn’t turn on a dime.” The COE will do its best to maintain a smooth treaty fishery operation during that challenging transition.

## **6. Water Quality Report**

The July report on TDG instances is now available at the TMT website and will also be linked to today’s agenda, Scott English (COE) reported. Of a total of 20 TDG instances in July, there were a few brief exceedances related to fixed monitoring station gauges, which were corrected quickly by the USGS. Also there were a few type 3 exceedances, mainly in the Bonneville reach. Water quality conditions in general are good, with similar conditions anticipated through the end of August. So far in August there has been only one TDG instance which was the result of vandalism at the Ice Harbor tailwater station.

## **7. Operations Review**

**Reservoirs.** Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,279.9 feet, with a target elevation of 1,277.3 feet for August 31. Hungry Horse is at elevation 3,549.82 feet, discharging 3.9 kcfs

Libby is at elevation 2,442.64 feet, discharging bull trout minimums of 7.0 kcfs with inflows of 6.6 kcfs. Albeni Falls is at elevation 2,062.19 feet, passing inflows of 11 kcfs. Dworshak is at elevation 1,541.83 feet with inflows of 0.9 kcfs and discharges of 10.3 kcfs.

Lower Granite average weekly inflows were 29.9 kcfs, with yesterday’s discharge at 28 kcfs. Priest Rapids is discharging 92 kcfs with weekly average inflows of 86.8 kcfs. McNary is discharging 107.2 kcfs with weekly average inflows of 126.8 kcfs.

The lower Columbia projects are meeting low-flow criteria specified in the FOP, Barton noted. Norris noted that in order to meet the minimum generation requirements at Bonneville, spill has been reduced to 70 kcfs due to low flow conditions. Recovery of a body in the McNary forebay could impair operational flexibility. Karl Kanbergs (COE) explained that a BPA real-time request to store water at John Day could raise the pool elevation above 264 feet, possibly as high as 264.7 feet. This could be a good operation because the water will be available to maintain spill at Bonneville later and to maintain McNary weekend flows at 80% of the previous week flow average. The drawback is that the criminal investigation, which requires the pool to be at last night’s levels, might cause the

John Day forebay to exceed the 1.5-foot treaty fishery constraint for part of a day. NOAA's preferred operation at this point is to maintain spill at Bonneville, Wagner said.

Mornings and evenings are the most critical elevation times for tribal fishers, who spread their nets in the mornings and retrieve them in the evenings around 8 pm, Dittmer said. .

The COE will inform TMT via email if the investigation in McNary forebay affects either the treaty fishery operation or the 80% spill target at McNary.

**Fish. Adults:** In the past 2 weeks, fall Chinook passage at Bonneville rose from less than 1,000 fish per day to 4,000 per day, with hundreds of thousands more expected, Wagner reported. Fall Chinook passage is following 2009 trends closely in terms of timing, magnitude and the 10-year average.

Steelhead passage started out strong but hasn't kept its momentum. Between 2,500-3,500 steelhead passed Bonneville per day for the past week, an increase over the previous week's count of 1,500 fish per day. It was hoped that steelhead passage would peak at several thousand fish per day like last year, but that's not happening and the reasons are unknown. The wild component is strong this year, with wild fish at 125,000 or nearly 50% of the total count of 303,000 steelhead (a wild-to-hatchery ratio of 20% is more common). Steelhead counts so far are close to the 10-year average.

This is turning out to be the year of the sockeye, with a prediction of 20 million fish returning to the Fraser River and phenomenal returns at many southern locations.

**Juveniles:** Fall Chinook subyearling passage is decreasing substantially, down to less than 1,000 per day at Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, John Day and Bonneville. Passage at McNary is 8,000 per day as juvenile migration season comes to an end.

**Power.** There was nothing to report today.

## **9. Next Meeting**

The next TMT meeting will be a conference call on September 8, followed by a meeting in person September 15.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Steve Barton	COE
Charles Morrill	Washington
Doug Baus	COE

Paul Wagner	NOAA
Tony Norris	BPA
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Scott Bettin	BPA
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