

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM
TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

September 29, 2010 Meeting

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Erin Halton

Notes: Robin Gumpert

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

The 9/15 and 9/22 Official Minutes and Facilitator Notes were open for review. With no further edits, they were considered final.

Dworshak Operations

Steve Barton, COE, provided a wrap up of Dworshak operations to meet the Nez Perce plan for releasing 200 KAF for augmentation. He reported that the specifics in the plan were met and the project was operating with minimum outflows. He noted the unforeseen basin-wide rainfall toward the end of the release, which led to an increase in outflows to meet the 1520' elevation target. In response to a question from Oregon, Barton explained that the increase in outflows was needed to adjust to the inflow forecast and that the COE operated to a “200 KAF release of storage despite inflows.” He said that the COE is looking into whether this type of accounting is consistent with the intent of the agreement.

2011 Water Management Plan

Steve Barton, COE, shared that the first draft WMP will be posted to the TMT page on 9/30, with the request for comments due to the COE by 10/29. The COE will make revisions and post a revised draft sometime around 11/19; and the document will be finalized by 12/31.

Autumn Treaty Fishing

Tom Lorz, CRITFC, shared that the last day of the current treaty fishing was occurring on 9/29, and suggested this will likely be the last SOR for the season. Steve Barton reported that the COE had issued a teletype in response to that latest SOR, to operate consistent with the request.

Libby Operations

Steve Barton, COE, and Joel Fenolio, Seattle District, recapped last week's unscheduled TMT discussion about the high inflows to Libby that created a challenge to meeting 2439' by the end of September. Hearing no objections (and general support) from TMT members during last week's call, the COE has operated the project at 9 kcfs and will

continue to do so until elevation 2439' is reached, sometime in October. Joel updated TMT with a graph depicting the latest prediction that this 'intersect' will occur around 10/15 – somewhat later than had been predicted last week because inflows had not receded below 9 kcfs as of today. Jim Litchfield, Montana, offered support for this operation and Paul Wagner, NOAA, voiced 'no objection'.

Action/Planned Operation: The COE will continue to operate Libby at 9 kcfs outflows until the project reaches elevation 2439', then will ramp down (using specified ramp rates) to 4.5 kcfs for the remainder of October. The COE will send email notification when this change occurs; TMT will check in on the operation at the next meeting, 10/6.

Albeni Falls Operations

Steve Barton, COE, said the COE and its partners held a 'lake level' meeting last week to review the biology, decision tree and other items relevant to Albeni Falls operations. The project is targeting a 2061' elevation at the end of September, after which time the COE will look for a recommendation in the form of an SOR. Paul Wagner, NOAA, shared that he will coordinate with Andy Ducks, IDFG, regarding the SOR; the SOR will be developed jointly by IDFG and USFWS.

Action/Next Steps: This item will be on the 10/6 TMT agenda.

Operations Review

Reservoirs – John Roache reported on Reclamation projects: Hungry Horse was at elevation 3540.97, with current outflows at 4.4 kcfs. The project will ramp down to Columbia Falls minimums once it hits its end of month elevation target (likely on October 1st or 2nd.) Grand Coulee was at elevation 1285.7', a good elevation for kokanee spawning and set up for chum operations. Steve Barton reported on COE projects: Libby was at elevation 2441.36' with 9.4 kcfs inflows (likely to recede to at or below 9 kcfs soon) and 9 kcfs outflows. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2061.24' with 22.5 kcfs inflows and 24.9 kcfs outflows. Dworshak was at elevation 1519.58', with 1.1 kcfs inflows and 1.6 kcfs outflows. Flows out of the Snake were 21.1 kcfs; 71.7 kcfs out of Priest Rapids and 92.7 kcfs out of McNary – all were higher than the previous week's averages.

Fish – Paul Wagner, NOAA, gave a fish status update. Adult counts at Bonneville were as follows: 432,933 Fall Chinook; 57,000 Fall Chinook jacks; 403,000 steelhead; and 152,000 wild steelhead. Fall Chinook adults were tracking much higher than 2009 and the 10-year average while steelhead numbers were well below 2009 and the 10-year average. Factors affecting the disparity between the two stocks, he suggested, could include age, size, migration timing and ocean conditions, among others. The Snake River steelhead and Fall Chinook adult populations were doing very well, and record numbers of sockeye have returned to Lower Granite. Russ Kiefer, Idaho, added that sockeye returns to the basin also look very good. Jacks at Lower Granite were tracking close to the 10-year average.

Regarding smolts, Paul reported that subyearling Fall Chinook counts were 1,500 on 9/18

and now down to the 100-200/day range. Russ Kiefer added that red counts in the Middle Fork Salmon River look very good.

Power – Tony Norris, BPA, shared that the June high runoff workshop he reported on at the 9/15 TMT meeting has been rescheduled for 10/12 at 1:00 pm at BPA. A link with the updated information will be posted to the TMT web page (attached to today's and/or 10/6 agenda), and can also be found at www.bpa.gov under “Newsroom”, “Calendar”.

Water quality – Scott English, COE, reported that many of the forebay gauges have been removed from service as is typical for this time of year. The COE is preparing now for winter monitoring, which will include use of the Warrendale gauge to assist with chum operations.

TMT Meeting Schedule

The following meeting dates have been scheduled for the rest of 2010:

- October 6 – face to face **at NOAA**
 - Agenda items include:
 - Autumn Treaty Fishing Summary
 - Libby Operations
 - NOAA Juvenile Survival Memo
 - Albeni Falls SOR(?)
 - Operations Review
- October 20 – face to face **at NOAA**
 - Agenda items include:
 - Libby Phase II Accounting
 - Albeni Falls SOR/Operations
- November 3 – face to face
- November 10 – face to face **at NOAA**
- November 17 – conference call as needed (this date is a conflict with FPOM)
- November 24 – as needed (this is the day before Thanksgiving)
- December 1 – face to face
- December 8 – Year End Review (location TBD)
- December 15 – face to face/conference call as needed – TBD

Columbia River Regional Forum
TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM OFFICIAL MINUTES

September 29, 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, Oregon, BOR, NOAA, USFWS, BPA, Idaho, 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. Meeting Minutes for September 15 and 22

There were no changes today to the facilitator's notes or official minutes, so both sets are considered final.

3. Dworshak Operations

Barton gave a wrap-up report on Dworshak operations in light of the 200 kaf Nez Perce release. The COE to the best of its ability followed the Nez Perce plan for disposition of the 200 kaf, drafting the reservoir down to elevation 1,520 feet. That elevation was targeted for around September 18, but heavy rainfall throughout the basin raised inflows, so discharge was increased on Tuesday Sep 21st, and 22nd, the project released the extra water to ensure that the elevation target was delivered. On September 23 Dworshak dropped to minimum flows. Total discharges have remained around 1.6 kcfs since then. Current elevation is 1,519.6 feet with the 200 kaf out.

Rick Kruger (Oregon) asked for clarification of whether the extra water was released to hit the target elevation or release 200 kaf. It was in response to an inflow forecast error, and the COE wanted to be sure that 200 kaf was released and the elevation target reached, Barton explained. The COE is double-checking the method of this year's calculation of the 200 kaf to ensure consistency with the Nez Perce agreement. The plan calls for holding 2.4 kcfs outflows until elevation 1,520 feet is attained, so the COE deemed it necessary to raise inflows to 2.4 kcfs when the target elevation wasn't reached on schedule, Steve Hall (COE Walla Walla) explained. With conclusion of the 2010 Nez Perce release, Dworshak operations will drop off TMT agendas for the season unless there's a special issue to bring to TMT's attention.

4. 2011 Water Management Plan

The first draft of the 2011 WMP will be posted to the TMT web page for review by the close of business tomorrow, with comments due by October 29. There will be at least two more comment periods after that, with the final draft available around November 19, Barton said.

As discussed at the last TMT meeting, the COE has provided explanations in the form of comment “balloons” for most of its significant revisions since last year. Barton asked that commenters also provide context for their edits.

5. Autumn Treaty Fishing – SOR 2010-C10

Today is the last day of fishing this week and probably for the 2010 fall season, Tom Lorz (CRITFC) reported. The tribes will review catch data after today and prepare another SOR if there’s more allowable take. The SOR for September 27-29, linked to today’s agenda, requested 1.5-foot bands at all three of the lower Columbia projects. The COE has issued instructions to the projects consistent with the SOR.

6. Libby Operations

On September 22, TMT held an unscheduled conference call to discuss the effects on Libby operations of heavy precipitation and runoff that began around September 20, in light of the 2,439-foot end of September elevation target. Areas in Libby basin received 2-3 inches of rain. The preferred alternative for responding to increased runoff was to maintain 9 kcfs releases, which would mean reaching elevation 2,439 feet in early October, around October 10. There were no objections to this operation during last week’s call so the COE implemented it.

The project is still discharging 9 kcfs and inflows have been 9 kcfs or more since September 20. Yesterday inflows were 9.4 kcfs. The graph linked to this item on today’s agenda shows the effect of maintaining 9 kcfs discharges with higher inflows: The project is now expected to reach elevation 2,439 feet some 5 days later than discussed in last week’s conference call – October 15 instead of October 10.

This looks like a good operation, Jim Litchfield (Montana) said. There were no objections to it, so the COE will maintain 9 kcfs outflows until the project reaches elevation 2,439 feet. TMT will revisit Libby operations at its October 6 meeting.

7. Albeni Falls Update

Stakeholders held a meeting September 7 in Coeur d'Alene to look at current conditions in Lake Pend Oreille, the status of resident species, and to discuss the decision tree guiding the operation, which currently targets elevation 2,061 feet by September 30. For October the plan is a "middle of the road" operation until the stakeholders draft the official SOR. NOAA is working on the issue now, Paul Wagner said. Stakeholders will hold another meeting today to discuss their recommendations. TMT will revisit Albeni Falls operations at its next meeting October 6.

7. Operations Review

a. Reservoirs. Hungry Horse is at elevation 3,540.97 feet. Outflows increased last week from 3.9 kcfs to the current releases of 4.4 kcfs. The project will ramp down to Columbia Falls minimums once it hits its end of month elevation target of 3540 feet. (likely on October 1st or 2nd). Grand Coulee is at elevation 1,285.7 feet. An end of September elevation 1,283 or higher is desirable for kokanee spawning and broodstock collection..

Libby inflows are 9.4 kcfs and discharges are 9 kcfs as reported earlier. Current elevation is 2,441.36 feet. Albeni Falls is at elevation 2,061.24 feet and discharging 24.9 kcfs. Inflows are 22.5 kcfs. Dworshak inflows are down to 1.1 kcfs. The project is discharging minimums of 1.6 kcfs and the current elevation is 1,519.58 feet.

Snake River stream flows are around 21.1 kcfs; last week's average discharge was 20.7 kcfs. Yesterday Priest Rapids dam discharged 71.7 kcfs in the mid-Columbia; the previous week's average flow was 58.3 kcfs. McNary is discharging 92.7 kcfs; last week's average flow was 78.4 kcfs. Generally the basin is responding very favorably to the heavy rains of late September and is saturated.

b. Fish. Adults are where the action is, Wagner reported. Fall Chinook counts at Bonneville Dam were 432,933 adults and 57,000 jacks, a phenomenal increase over the 10-year average as well as last year's counts. Steelhead counts at Bonneville are 403,000 fish to date and 152,000 wild steelhead, which is below last year's count and the 10-year average. Karl Kanbergs (COE) asked what might account for the disparity in fall Chinook and steelhead passage numbers at Bonneville. A-run steelhead didn't fare well at all this year, which reflects the 2009 outmigration numbers. Those fish had a high in-river survival rate of 68%, but ocean conditions haven't been good for them. B-run steelhead passage begins in September and these fish spend 2 years in the ocean. A-run steelhead counts at Bonneville were above the 10-year average. B-run steelhead counts at Bonneville are below the 10-year average. There's no clear explanation for the disparity between steelhead and fall Chinook passage counts,

but ocean conditions play a big role, Wagner said. Kruger noted that fall Chinook are 4 or 5 years old, so they're exposed to different timing and outmigration conditions. Steelhead passage at Lower Granite is still underway.

Snake River steelhead populations are faring well this year, a reflection of last year's 68% in-river survival rate. Fall Chinook passage at Lower Granite was a record-setting 433,000 fish this year. That's a phenomenal comeback from the dismal 1990 count: 379 fish. Sockeye counts at Lower Granite were 2,201 fish. Kruger asked whether any of these have made it to Lake Pend Oreille yet. Russ Kiefer (Idaho) said at last count it was 1,300 fish but he didn't have a final tally yet, which he will provide at the October 6 TMT meeting.

Smolt passage is limited to fall Chinook at present, with a bump to 1,300 fish on September 18, Wagner said. That's in line with expectations for this time of year, when smolt passage slows down. Redd counts at the upper end of the little fork of the Salmon River looked impressive, Kiefer added. With better returns this year, fish are moving into secondary spawning areas. This year also brought a good return of wild endemic fish to the middle fork of the Salmon River.

c. Power System. A BPA-sponsored workshop on high water runoff in June has been changed from October 7 (as announced at the September 15 TMT meeting) to October 12, Tony Norris said. Those who have already preregistered as attendees with Steve Kerns (srkerns@bpa.gov) will receive an update on the change. Significant runoff in June coincided with significant wind events on the power grid, so BPA has produced a report describing that operation and is presenting this workshop. The report is available on BPA's website, www.bpa.gov.

d. Water Quality. With fish passage season drawing to a close, most of the forebay water quality gauges have been removed from service, Scott English (COE) reported. The Warrendale gage is operational in preparation for the chum and winter monitoring.

3. Next Meetings

The next TMT meeting will be in person October 6. The agenda will include treaty fishing, Libby operations, an Albeni Falls update, Science Center memos on juvenile survival, and the usual operations review. Subsequent TMT meetings were scheduled for October 20 and November 3, 10 and 24. The annual TMT year-end review will be on December 8, location TBA.

Name	Affiliation
Steve Barton	COE
Rick Kruger	Oregon
Doug Baus	COE
John Roache	BOR

Scott English	COE
Laura Hamilton	COE
Karl Kanbergs	COE
Matt Reeves	COE
Kim Johnson	COE
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Dave Wills	USFWS
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Russ George	WMC
Barry Espenson	CBB
Rob Allerman	Deutsch Bank
Doug Vine	Thomson Reuters
Steve Hall	COE Walla Walla
Tom Le	Puget Sound Energy
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Ruth Burris	PGE