

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

October 8, 2010 Conference Call

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES

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.

Libby October Operations

Steve Barton, COE, began the discussion with a recap of operations at Libby over the last several weeks. He reminded TMT that their recommendations had guided the COE's operations to manage higher flows in to the Kootenai Basin since September. Barton noted TMT's recommendations to maintain 9 kcfs with a goal of intersecting elevation 2439.0 ft sometime in October rather than increasing outflows to keep up with inflows and meet an end of September target elevation of 2439.0 ft. Lingering high flows have not allowed the COE to reduce outflows at the project, and the changing inflow assumptions have continued to shift the projected date for meeting the target elevation later into October (the latest estimate was October 18-20.)

Given all this, TMT had discussed an alternative operation during the 10/6 meeting that would bring the project closer to ‘normal’ October operating flows. Today, Steve shared a range of options for moving forward that included increasing discharge to meet 2439’, ramping down to one unit (~4.5 kcfs); holding the project at a discharge lower than 9 kcfs flows; or maintaining status quo of 9 kcfs outflows. Before he invited TMT input, he shared the COE's preference to initiate a steady ramp down (of about 1 kcfs every other day) to reach 4.5 kcfs around mid-October and then hold the project at ‘normal’ October operations. (He later emphasized that this would be the COE's preference for this year only, and was not intended to set a precedent for future years.)

TMT members weighed in. Paul Wagner, NOAA, reiterated the proposal he suggested on the last TMT conference call, to ramp the project down to 4.5 kcfs over the next few days if this operation would provide some assurance that the chum operation could start earlier in November. He said he shared this proposal with the Salmon Managers at FPAC and did not have any additional input to share from that discussion. Jim Litchfield, Montana, said his preference would be for a gradual ramp down and said mid-month would be an acceptable time frame to get to 4.5 kcfs. He also noted that he was pleased with the Fall operation this year. Ron Boyce, Oregon, expressed concern that the operation was morphing from the original intent, which was to support summer juveniles by targeting 2439’ at the end of September. He recalled agreeing to the shifting operation in September with the assurance that the elevation would be met in October. In order not to

set a precedent, he felt the COE should continue to operate toward that target elevation. Dave Wills, USFWS, shared Oregon's concern for precedent-setting, and also said he would support the operation proposed by NOAA for this year only in order to support the possibility of starting the chum operation sooner. The action agencies (COE and BPA) responded that this operation would have no bearing on the start date for chum operations and urged the Salmon Managers to make recommendations today independent of their interests for chum operations. Steve Barton added that water sent to Grand Coulee will be stored as space is available, and will be used to support chum operations; he further clarified that no decision on the near term operation of Libby will impact the volume of water that will be available for that later operation. Russ Kiefer, Idaho, said that if this operation will not have any net change in benefit to anadromous fish, he would propose the COE operate to Montana's preference for its resident fish. Dave Wills, USFWS, echoed this sentiment.

Planned Operation: Given the discussion heard today, the COE shared its planned operation: Starting this afternoon, ramp the project down to reach one small operating unit of ~4.5 kcfs outflows next week using a ramp rate of 1 kcfs/day (likely reaching that outflow by Tuesday 10/12). The following TMT members were polled:

- Oregon – While this is not the preferred operation, no objection. This should not set a precedent for future years, and the goal should remain to release the water in September to support migrating juvenile salmonids.
- Montana – Supports the operation.
- Idaho – No objection.
- Washington – No objection.
- Spokane Tribe of Indians – Abstain.
- Kootenai Tribe of Idaho – No objection.
- USFWS – No objection. (Jason Flory, USFWS at Kootenai, shared a preference for a slow ramp rate, and said 1 kcfs/day was acceptable.)
- NOAA – Supports the operation.
- BPA – Supports the operation.

Action/Next Steps: The COE planned to begin its operation later today. Steve Barton thanked everyone for working through this issue together and seeking to find a beneficial solution to the unforeseen and changing conditions.

TMT Call to Discuss Albeni Falls SOR

There is a need to convene a TMT conference call next week to discuss an SOR for Albeni Falls. TMT members expressed a preference to hold the call on the afternoon of Thursday 10/14 or morning of Friday 10/15.

Action/Next Steps: Steve Barton and Russ Kiefer will work together to set a date and Steve will send email notification with date, time and call-in information to TMT as soon as possible. The next face to face TMT meeting will be held on Wednesday 10/20 at NOAA Fisheries.

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM OFFICIAL MINUTES

October 8, 2010

Notes: Pat Vivian

1. Introduction

Today's TMT conference call was chaired by Steve Barton (COE) and facilitated by Erin Halton (DS Consulting). Representatives of Washington, BPA, NOAA, USFWS, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, the Kootenai Tribe, Spokane Tribe 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. Libby Operations

TMT had a conference call September 22 to discuss Libby operations in terms of reaching elevation 2,439 feet by September 30, Barton recalled. With the late season inflows from rainfall at the end of September, drafting to 2,439 feet would have resulted in increased discharges out of Libby, which the Salmon Managers felt would be detrimental to river conditions. So TMT agreed to push the Libby elevation target out to the first 10 days of October.

Since then, cool rainy weather has kept inflows high, and maintaining the current operation of 12 kcfs flows would put the reservoir at elevation 2,439 feet around October 18-20, with a risk that it could be pushed out even further. Libby inflows are hovering around 6.5 kcfs and the basin has been showing signs of saturated soils. There's a storm coming this weekend and an outside chance that if precipitation continues, the reservoir may not reach elevation 2,439 feet at all this fall.

The purpose of today's meeting was to reach consensus on a reasonable operation for Libby under these conditions. Options the COE identified are:

1. Pick up discharges as needed to bring the reservoir down to 2,439 feet elevation.
2. Ramp down to 1 unit at peak efficiency or around 4-4.5 kcfs.
3. Pick a lower flow level than the current 9 kcfs and hold it until the end of October.
4. Consider other options that provide a smoother ramp down.

Barton asked TMT members to state their preferences, noting that, between now and the end of October, the COE would prefer a steady ramp down of around 1 kcfs per day until the operation reaches 1 unit at efficient loading (about 4-4.5 kcfs). That would put the reservoir at 2,439 feet in mid October. He noted that this operation is being suggested only for this year in response to current conditions.

The Salmon Managers discussed the Libby ramp down options and how these might affect the chum operation in November. They considered the current projection of 7 kcfs out for the rest of the month vs. 1 unit at peak efficiency. It would take approximately 2 days of 25 ksf augmentation per day to provide additional chum flows for the first few days of November.

The Action Agencies noted that flows from Libby won't affect the ability to implement the chum operation in November. If chum show up on November 2 or 3, water will be available at Grand Coulee to implement the chum operation at that time. The following views of the Libby operation were expressed:

NOAA suggested saving volume by ramping down quickly if that will provide assurance chum flows can begin early in November. **USFWS** supported NOAA's recommendation re: chum flow storage. Starting the chum operation closer to November 1 could be helpful this year, when an unknown number of fish will be returning. Noted that chum have begun spawning almost immediately in years when chum flows started earlier than usual.

Oregon recommended staying with an operation that gets the reservoir to elevation 2,439 feet. On September 22, Oregon didn't object to changing the Libby elevation target from the end of September based on an understanding that 2,439 feet elevation would be attained no later than October 10. Concerned about Libby operations morphing beyond their original intent, which is to augment summer flows for juvenile salmon. Agreed with the Action Agencies that there's no certainty chum will be present to benefit from flow augmentation if it begins early.

Montana noted the fall operation of Libby has been successful and ramping down now is appropriate. Preferred a more gradual ramp down from 9 to 4.5 kcfs over a couple of days for the sake of the river environment, regardless of whether fish are moving at present. There's an advantage to storing water as high in the system as possible because it provides extra flexibility later. If it's possible to store water higher in the system now without affecting resident fish, that would be the best approach.

Idaho advocated an operation that would benefit Montana's resident fish, as it appears that Libby operations will have no significant impact on anadromous fish at this time. Agreed with Montana that it's best to store water as high in the system as possible.

BPA saw no direct connection between Libby operations now and chum flows in November. Decisions about these operations should be made separately. Water stored at Libby will end up at Grand Coulee, where it will be available when chum need it. The chum operation usually begins when chum arrive around November 5-10, so releasing flows before then would negate the

benefits of storage. Whatever is stored at Libby now will be drafted out before the end of December. The **COE** agreed with BPA's characterization of water storage for chum in November. Libby operations now won't affect storage of water for chum; the operational decisions are separate.

In response to the above comments regarding Libby, the COE proposed a weekend ramp down to minimum flows of around 4.5 kcfs early next week at a ramp down rate of approximately 1-1.5 kcfs per day. Upon reach 4.5 kcfs, the project will maintain minimum flows for the rest of this fall. TMT members were polled on this operation:

- **Oregon** – Prefers to draft the reservoir toward elevation 2,439 feet, but didn't object to the proposal. Expressed hope that in future years Libby reservoir will be operated as intended for juvenile salmon.
- **Montana** – Supports the proposed operation.
- **Idaho** – No objection.
- **Washington** – No objection.
- **Spokane Tribe** – Abstained from voting.
- **Kootenai Tribe** – No objection
- **USFWS** – No objection
- **NOAA** – No objection
- **BPA** – No objection.

The COE will initiate the Libby ramp down this evening until 1 unit at efficient loading is reached. At that point normal operations will resume.

3. Next Meeting

The next TMT meeting will be a conference call at the end of next week to discuss the winter Albeni Falls operation. The next regular TMT meeting in person will be October 20 at NOAA's offices in Portland.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Steve Barton	COE
Charles Morrill	Washington
Tony Norris	BPA
Scott Bettin	BPA
Paul Wagner	NOAA

David Wills	USFWS
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Ron Boyce	Oregon
Billy Barquin	Kootenai
Joel Fenolio	COE Seattle
Kristian Michelson	COE Seattle
Tim Heizenrader	Centaurus
Jason Flory	USFWS Spokane
Doug Baus	COE
Deanna Pavlik-Kunkel	Spokane
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Karl Kanbergs	COE