

Columbia River Regional Forum
TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM OFFICIAL MINUTES

November 10, 2010

Notes: Pat Vivian

1. Introduction

Today's TMT conference call was chaired and facilitated by Steve Barton (COE) with representatives of BPA, BOR, USFWS, NOAA, COE, Washington, CRITFC, Montana, Idaho and others participating in the discussion. 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. Chum Operations

Yesterday's chum spawning survey in the Ives Island complex found 38 live chum, 2 dead and 11 redds, Paul Wagner (NOAA) reported. He commended the Action Agencies for providing such a steady tailwater operation for chum.

Glen Vanselow (Pacific NW Waterways Association) asked whether the current 11.3-11.7 foot tailwater elevation below Bonneville Dam means that more water is being released than 2 weeks ago. Yes, flows are being augmented using upriver storage, Tony Norris (BPA) replied. This operation is identical to chum operations in years past, Barton added.

3. Lower Granite Spring Pool Operations for Navigation

On November 8 the COE Walla Walla office hosted a public meeting to discuss navigation concerns on the Snake River. Steve Hall (COE Walla Walla) gave a report. In September 2009, the COE received a request from navigation stakeholders in the Lewiston/Clarkston area to maintain an elevation of at least 1 foot above MOP in the Lower Granite pool to support safe loading of grain barges and access to terminals. The COE attempted to meet the request when MOP ended in August 2010 by maintaining an additional foot of elevation in the Lower Granite pool. Part of the request was to repeat the navigation operation in spring 2011, with more time to examine the alternatives.

This year will bring an extended lock outage at Lower Granite for work at The Dalles, John Day and Lower Monumental dams, Hall said. The outage will no doubt affect the ability of grain shippers in the area to move their product to market before the next year's crop arrives. In response to the shipping concerns, the COE has been working to minimize the lock outage as much as possible. It won't be easy because the job is huge – installing a massive gate at Lower Monumental Dam. The gate will be shipped downstream in 3 sections and assembled onsite, using a large crane that's being built now.

The tow boaters have asked the COE to operate the Lower Granite pool from elevation 734-737 feet, with 734 feet as a minimum through March 2011. Once Lower Granite operation has entered the MOP phase, the request is for an additional foot of elevation, for a range of 734-735 feet, rather than 733 – 734 feet, the usual MOP range, through the end of June 2011. Their concern is that the shortened window for shipping will affect their opportunity to ship grain from Lewiston to Clarkston by the beginning of July when the 2011 harvest begins. These navigation concerns are focused mainly on a 3-mile stretch from the port of Lewiston, at mile 1.2 on the Clearwater River, to mile 138 on the Snake River near the port of Clarkston, Idaho.

Barton asked for clarifying questions from TMT members to get an early start on defining a course of action to resolve these concerns. Norris asked what an extra foot of elevation will allow in added increments of grain shipped. Fletcher replied that it amounts to a substantial increase in volume and he could supply exact figures later. Due to increased siltation at the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake rivers, Vanselow said, shippers have been trying to maintain existing capability to load their barges, not increase shipping capacity.

Jennifer Bly (Port of Clarkston) said the port's main concern is safety and economic impacts if cruise ships are blocked from using the tour dock facility. The local economy suffers whenever the river is down. The port is seeking a dredging permit for the sludge problem, depending on whether funding is available. Barges are difficult to steer when turbidity is high, Fletcher explained. He recalled strict shipping limitations in the summer of 2010 due to low river elevations at Lower Granite. The goal is to maintain at least 14 feet of depth in the shipping channels.

Hall described a presentation on sedimentation that was part of the November 8 navigation meeting and Wagner expressed interest in hearing that presentation at TMT. Barton asked TMT members to direct any questions on this issue to him or Steve Hall, who will coordinate the communications with navigators regarding this issue.

4. Proposed Spill Patterns for 2011 Passage Season

This item was added to today's agenda at the request of Brian Fletcher (Tidewater Barge Line). This past fish passage season, there were instances of actual or near collisions with guide walls at dams, or other navigation mishaps at lockages, Barton recalled. The COE is therefore considering a number of changes to the 2011 Fish Passage Plan regarding spill patterns and concerns raised during the 2010 passage season.

Tow boaters submitted an SOR to the COE during the low flows and navigation challenges of August 2010, Fletcher recalled. This year, the tow boaters want to understand ahead of time (i.e. before August) if there will be any

spill patterns or modifications that could affect navigation. These changes could originate at McNary or John Day dams as well as at the Lower Granite Dam.

In response to these concerns, the COE will lead an ongoing regional discussion of spill patterns between now and March 2011 when the 2011 Fish Passage Plan is published, Barton said.

5. Next Meeting

Because the next 10-day weather forecast is relatively benign, and Thanksgiving is looming, TMT canceled its November 17 call and scheduled the next TMT meeting in person on December 1. If any unexpected events or issues arise before then, the COE will notify TMT and schedule a meeting as needed. The 2010 TMT year end review will be held on December 8.

Name	Affiliation
Steve Barton	COE
Tony Norris	BPA
Mary Mellema	BOR
David Wills	USFWS
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Cindy LeFleur	Washington
Charles Morrill	Washington
Tom Lorz	CRITFC
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Steve Hall	COE Walla Walla
Glen Vanselow	Pacific NW Waterways Association
Brian Fletcher	Tidewater Barge Line
Jennifer Bly	Port of Clarkston, ID
Dave Benner	FPC
Margaret Filardo	FPC
Russ George	WMC
Tim Heizenrader	Centaurus
Rob Allerman	Deutsch Bank
Richelle Beck	DRA
Mike Shapley	Snohomish PUD
Karl Kanbergs	COE
Doug Vine	Thompson Reuters
Tom Le	Puget Sound Energy
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Scott Bettin	BPA