

## COLUMBIA RIVER TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

July 27, 2011 Conference Call

### Facilitator's Summary

Facilitator: 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.*

#### **Dworshak Operations**

Doug Baus, COE, said today's discussion of Dworshak operations would focus on updating TMT on current operations. Gunnar Leffler, Walla Walla District, provided a visual of the current operation, 14 kcfs, and the project's projected elevation moving forward at this outflow. The COE is managing the operation to stay within Idaho's state water quality standards of 110% therefore it is unlikely Dworshak will reach 1535' by the end of August. The current model shows that this elevation will be reached around 9/3 at this outflow. TDG was hovering around 108-108.5% and Gunnar explained that many changing factors (like barometric pressure) influence TDG and do not have a linear relationship with powerhouse spill, so from a risk management perspective the COE does not believe the risk associated with operating at TDG levels higher than the current operation are worth the potential adverse impacts that could result from higher TDG levels downstream on hatchery operations. In response to a question from Oregon's Rick Kruger about trying to meet the elevation target closer to the end of August, Gunnar said increasing outflows to 14.5 kcfs would have the project reaching 1535' by 9/2, and could cause TDG cap exceedances. Dave Wills, USFWS, added that from the hatchery perspective, there is a biological need to stay within the TDG limits, as higher levels cause stressors to the fish and could cause disease outbreaks. He said the current conditions were acceptable to the hatchery. The Nez Perce Tribe was contacted after the TMT meeting and had no comment on the current operation.

**Next Steps/Action:** The COE planned to continue operating the project at 14 kcfs and in the meantime work with the Dworshak Board to understand their preference for shaping 200 kaf releases in September to reach elevation 1520'. Operations at Dworshak will be contingent on the Dworshak Board's recommendations. TMT will revisit this item at their next meeting on 8/3.

#### **Libby Operations**

Doug Baus, Division COE, and Kristian Mickelson, Seattle District COE, shared that Libby was operating 11 kcfs outflows and was at elevation 2451.69'. Kristian developed a set of slides to depict different inflow projections tied with a COE proposal to increase flows to 14 kcfs in anticipation of an SOR from the Kootenai Tribe for lower releases in September (approximately 6 kcfs) that would accommodate the tribe's habitat work. The current end of September draft target is 2449 feet. Kristian said this proposed flow was based on the COE's best professional judgment for managing conditions and meeting multiple needs in the river. The first slide, he said, was the 'ideal' scenario; other slides were also potential outcomes of this operation. TMT members thanked the COE for

sharing the slides and said they were helpful to paint the picture. After further clarifying discussion about the slides, TMT members were polled on their level of support for the COE's proposal to increase flows at Libby to 14 kcfs today:

- Oregon – No objection
- Washington – No objection
- Montana – Support the operation for now; want to monitor closely with changing inflow conditions
- USFWS – No objection
- NOAA – Support the operation, and agree on the need to monitor closely
- Salish Kootenai Tribe – Support
- Reclamation – Support
- BPA – Support
- \*Nez Perce - No objection (the Tribal representative was not in attendance during the meeting but contacted via phone after the meeting).

**Action/Next Steps:** Given no objections to the proposal, the COE planned to increase flows at Libby to 14 kcfs today. TMT will revisit the operation next week (on 8/3) with updated scenarios and likely an SOR from the Kootenai Tribe.

### **SOR 2011-03 Follow Up**

Doug Baus, COE, said that the request submitted last week from USFWS, WDFW, ODFW, Nez Perce Tribe and Shoshone-Bannock Tribe had been discussed at the 7/20 TMT meeting and further coordinated internally by the COE and partner action agencies. There was no consensus on the SOR nor from TMT members during the 7/20 TMT meeting. The COE feels that the 2009 study at Little Goose did not show a clear biological benefit to implementing the request for additional spill at Little Goose. Also, the majority of the subyearling Chinook had passed the project therefore it does not appear this operation would result in significant biological benefits. For those reasons the COE made the decision not to implement the SOR at this time. However they were committed to staying engaged and coordinated with the region on the concerns raised with operating Lower Granite at MOP+2. The 8/3 TMT meeting agenda will include Lower Granite and the COE will share information on survey results from the area that will inform next steps.

Paul Wagner, NOAA, commented that NOAA does accept the need to operate outside Lower Granite this year for navigation safety reasons, and would like to see the issue resolved by next year. The option put forward in the SOR was a creative solution, and at this time, NOAA does not see a meaningful biological benefit to implementing it. Fall Chinook have a decreased propensity to migrate this time of year. NOAA is OK with the COE decision not to implement the SOR.

BPA's Scott Bettin said BPA supports the COE's decision not to implement the SOR. Reclamation's John Roache said Reclamation supports the COE's decision not to implement the SOR.

Dave Wills, USFWS, said his agency would not elevate the issue but asked the COE to

consider that the 2009 study conditions were different than this year's, and reiterated the position that the proposed operation would have a benefit to the fish, with higher survival through the spillway than the turbines. Washington and Oregon representatives agreed with what was expressed by USFWS, and also said they would not elevate the issue. Rick Kruger, Oregon, added that many of the Clearwater fish were still passing the project.

**Next Face to Face Meeting, 8/3**

Agenda items include:

- Dworshak Operations
- Lower Granite MOP Operations/Survey Update
- Libby Operations/SOR
- Operations Review
- Other?

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

**July 27, 2011**

Notes: Pat Vivian

**1. Introduction**

Today's TMT conference call was chaired by Doug Baus, COE, and facilitated by Robin Gumpert, DS Consulting. Representatives of Washington, Montana, NOAA, BPA, USFWS, BOR, COE, Oregon, the Salish-Kootenai Tribe and others attended. This summary is an official record of the proceedings, not a verbatim transcript. Any questions or comments should be directed to the TMT chair.

**2. Dworshak Operations**

Baus and Gunnar Leffler, COE Walla Walla, reported. A link to this agenda item shows a graph of the current Dworshak operation. Consistent with RPA 4 the Corps is operating Dworshak not to exceed Idaho State Total Dissolved Gas (TDG) water quality standard of 110%. Based on this operation the Corps expects to reach an elevation of 1535 feet about September 3, according to current forecast estimates provided by the Walla Walla district office

Current discharges of 14 kcfs consist of 9.5 kcfs through the powerhouse and 4.5 kcfs spill. Baus emphasized that the COE has yet to coordinate with the Dworshak board regarding the Nez Perce 200 kaf. Today's graph therefore depicts only a hypothetical transition from elevation 1,535 feet to 1,520 feet at end September. The COE will report to TMT after the Dworshak board decides on an operation for the 200 kaf.

TDG levels at Dworshak are a function of temperature, barometric pressure and the spill to powerhouse ratio, Leffler explained. It's not a linear relationship, and conditions can change suddenly. Therefore the COE decided a consistent operation of 14 kcfs out is best. A scenario that raised outflows to 14.5 kcfs only attained the target elevation (1535 feet) one day sooner – September 2 instead of September 3, based on the analog water year 1974 – while increasing the odds of exceeding the TDG limit.

Rick Kruger, **Oregon**, asked whether it would be possible to adjust outflows when barometric pressure and temperatures are suitable to operate below 110% TDG. Leffler said increasing outflows even on a short term basis would make it too easy to exceed the gas cap.

David Wills, **USFWS**, said a sustained TDG saturation level of 110% and above for periods in August would put extra stressors on fish, which could tip the

balance toward disease outbreak. Therefore, USFWS does not recommend operating close to the 110% standard at this time.

The COE contacted the Nez Perce after the meeting and the Nez Perce had no comment on the current operation.

There was discussion of the likelihood that inflows will decline or increase from what the modeling projects. This would affect the date on which the target elevation is reached. If inflows decrease, the target elevation (1535 feet) would be attained sooner. If inflows increase and modeling indicates that attainment will be pushed out past, say September 3, the COE will provide TMT with an operations plan.

The COE will coordinate with the Dworshak board and TMT will revisit Dworshak operations at its next meeting on August 3.

### **3. Libby Operations**

Kristian Mickelson, COE Seattle, reported. The current operation consists of 11 kcfs releases, with a forebay elevation of 2,451.69 feet. Mickelson showed TMT four slides, linked to today's agenda. Slide 1 depicts a COE proposed operation to achieve a gradual rampdown and smooth transition into September with discharges, in September, of approximately 6 kcfs. The proposal would increase releases from 11 kcfs to 14 kcfs now, to accommodate an anticipated Kootenai Tribe request for lower releases in September to accommodate habitat restoration work. The tribe is planning to formally present a request to TMT in an SOR on August 3. All four slides linked to today's agenda depict the goal of reaching elevation 2,449 feet by the end of September, but show different inflow forecasts with corresponding outflow adjustments, both in August and September, to meet the elevation goal.

There was discussion of the importance of monitoring Libby inflows closely as the season progresses. Today's decision will affect operations for only the next week or so, and the COE has identified 14 kcfs out as a good starting point for this near-term operation. When TMT members commented that today's range of scenarios was particularly helpful, Mickelson said he would continue to produce them weekly throughout the season. The COE will monitor Libby inflows closely.

TMT members were polled on their views of the COE proposal:

- **Oregon** – No objection.
- **Washington** – No objection.

- **Montana** – Supports the operation. Libby operations should be revisited weekly throughout the rest of passage season.
- **USFWS** – No objection.
- **NOAA** – Supports the operation.
- **Salish-Kootenai** – Supports the operation.
- **BPA** – Supports the operation; looks forward to finishing the habitat project this year.
- **BOR** – Supports the operation.
- **Nez Perce** – No objection (did not attend today's meeting, but provided comments afterward).

Hearing no objections, the COE will ramp Libby discharges up to 14 kcfs today. TMT will review this operation at its August 3 meeting along with the SOR presented by the Kootenai Tribe.

#### ***4. SOR 2011-03 Little Goose Nighttime Spill to Gas Cap***

On July 19, the COE received SOR 2011-03 signed by USFWS, Washington, Oregon, the Nez Perce and Shoshone-Bannock tribes, Baus recalled. Unanimous consensus was not evident based on the signatories of the SOR nor there unanimous consensus after the TMT polling on the SOR during the July 20 TMT meeting. During the July 20 TMT meeting the COE committed to completing additional coordination on the SOR and would notify TMT once the COE made a decision on the SOR.

After reviewing additional information the Corps decided not to implement the SOR 2011-03. The COE rational was based on factors such as lack of unanimous consensus on the SOR, information in the 2009 Beeman evaluation of the TWS operation and, the high proportion of subyearling Chinook that have already passed LWG to date. Based on this information it was unclear on what, if any survival improvement would result from this operation. Furthermore, based on the relatively high percentage of subyearling Chinook that had passed Lower Granite Dam it did not appear implementing this operation would result in significant survival benefits.

That said, the COE continues to be aware of concerns regarding the Lower Granite MOP+2 operation requested in SOR 2011-01. The COE will continue to coordinate with TMT on the results of channel surveys and implementation of MOP+2 for navigation at Lower Granite.

TMT members gave their views of the COE's decision not to implement SOR 2011-03:

- **NOAA** – Didn't sign the SOR because fall Chinook have a decreased propensity to migrate this time of year. The proposal is creative but there appears to be no meaningful benefit based on the 2009 Beeman report. NOAA is OK with the COE decision not to implement the SOR.
- **BPA** – Supports the COE's decision; agrees with continuing the current operation at Little Goose.
- **USFWS** – Won't elevate the issue beyond TMT, but asked the COE to consider additional factors. Now only would the extra spill resulting from implementation of SOR 2011-03 reduce forebay residence time, it would divert more fish away from the turbines and through the spillway, which appears to offer survival advantages.
- **Washington** – Agrees with USFWS comments. However, no objection at this time. TMT needs an opportunity to discuss the 2009 study report regarding this issue. After that discussion, Washington might have additional comments.
- **BOR** – Supports the COE's decision.
- **Oregon** – Disagrees with the decision but won't elevate the issue.

### ***5. Next TMT Meeting***

TMT will meet next in person August 3. That agenda will include updates on Dworshak and Libby operations and presentation of the Libby SOR from the Kootenai Tribe.

<b><i>Name</i></b>	<b><i>Affiliation</i></b>
Charles Morrill	Washington
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Scott Bettin	BPA
David Wills	USFWS
John Roache	BOR
Doug Baus	COE
Kyle Kanbergs	COE
Rick Kruger	Oregon
Kevin Shaffer	COE
Gunnar Leffler	COE Walla Walla
Dave Benner	FPC
Kristian Mickelson	COE

Josh McCall  
Barry Espenson  
Mike Shafley  
Richelle Beck  
Rob Allerman  
Steve XX  
Doug Vine

Puget Sound Energy  
CBB  
Snohomish PUD  
Grant PUD  
Deutsch Bank  
Salish Kootenai Tribe  
Thompson Reuters