

COLUMBIA RIVER TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM
September 28, 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.

SOR USFWS/IDFG 2011-01

Russ Kiefer, Idaho, presented this SOR on behalf of USFWS and IDFG for winter lake level management operations at Lake Pend Oreille, specifying a minimum lake elevation of 2051' for 2011-12 and 2055' for 2012-13. Russ offered his hope that the region could set up a planned operation for the next two years while acknowledging that it will need to be revisited next year (USFWS/IDFG would submit an SOR in 2012) and is subject to change based on actual conditions and biological data. He went on to briefly describe the justification (details can be found in the SOR) and said that because kokanee are improving and are expected to spawn in high numbers next year, the authors of the SOR recommend a slight departure from the Decision Tree just for these two years to provide the higher elevation next year when more fish are expected to return. Also, this operation would support a University of Idaho graduate project that is collecting data to help identify how this lake level management has supported kokanee recovery, and what operation would be 'enough' to support egg-to-fry survival.

TMT members discussed the factors that would contribute to shaping next year's operation –the number of bull trout returning to the area, water conditions, and the needs of the graduate project were all deemed important considerations for setting up operations next year. TMT members also expressed that revisiting this operation next year and looking at all these factors is key to their support for the recommendation. Joel Fenolio, Seattle District COE, said for this year, a deviation request would be submitted by Seattle District to operate Albeni Falls to get to the minimum lake elevation if the COE did decide to implement the request this year.

With that, TMT members were polled on their level of support for the recommendation outlined in the SOR:

- Oregon – no objection
- Montana – no objection
- Washington –not present; FPAC Chair Paul Wagner reported that Washington had raised concerns about setting up a two year operation, but would likely not object with the caveat that the plan would be revisited next year.
- BPA – no objection if revisit next year
- Reclamation – no objection if revisit next year
- CRITFC/CTUIR -- no objection if revisit next year
- COE -- no objection if revisit next year
- Nez Perce – no objection (not in attendance at the meeting but contacted via phone after the meeting)

Planned Operation: Hearing no objections, the COE planned to implement the request for this year's operation. TMT will revisit Lake Pend Oreille operations again next year.

Operations Review

Reservoirs – John Roache, Reclamation, reported on projects: Grand Coulee was at elevation 1283.5' and will slowly fill in October as conditions allow. Hungry Horse was at elevation 3550.8' with 3 kcfs outflows that would be reduced to meet Columbia Falls minimums next week. Doug Baus, COE, reported on projects. Libby was at elevation 2446.91' with 4.7 kcfs inflows and 6.0 kcfs outflows. Albeni Falls was at elevation 2060.51' with 11.5 kcfs inflows and 19.5 kcfs outflows. Dworshak was at elevation 1519.48' with 1.0 kcfs inflows and 1.7 kcfs outflows. Inflows at Lower Granite were 32.7 kcfs; at Priest Rapids were 77.5 kcfs; at McNary were 118.8 kcfs and at Bonneville were 116.9 kcfs. Doug reported that fish ladder work at Bonneville was expected to be completed by 10/31 and the COE anticipated no impacts to chum operations.

Fish – Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported on fish. Subyearling Chinook at Lower Granite continued to show “reasonably high” counts, around 977/day, and 500/day at Bonneville. The adult fall Chinook total season count was 359,000. McNary steelhead passage was about 1,000-2,000/day. Total Fall Chinook counts at Lower Granite were 17,800 – a high number relative to the 10-year average. Steelhead lined up with the 10-year average at 11,000.

Water quality – Laura Hamilton, COE, reported that forebay gauge TDG data is no longer being reported. Doug Baus also reported that a revised spill priority list for winter will be forthcoming.

Power system – Nothing to report

TMT Schedule

TMT discussed their schedule for the rest of the year, and it is proposed as follows (as always, check the TMT web page for updates to the schedule):

- October: 10/5, 10/12, 10/26; conference call as needed on 10/19.
- November: 11/2, 11/9 face to face; conference calls as needed on 11/16, 11/23, and 11/30.
- December: 12/7 Year End Review; 12/14 face to face; conference calls as needed on 12/21 and 12/28.

Columbia River Regional Forum
TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM OFFICIAL MINUTES

September 28, 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 Oregon, BPA, BOR, the COE, USFWS, NOAA, Montana, CRITFC/Umatilla, Idaho and others attended. This summary is an official record of the proceedings, not a verbatim transcript.

2. Lake Pend Oreille Operations – SOR USFWS/IDFG 2011-1

Russ Kiefer, Idaho, presented this SOR, which is a two-year request with a minimum control elevation of 2,051 feet for this winter's operation of Lake Pend Oreille and a MCE of 2,055 feet for next winter's operation. Kiefer emphasized that the requesting agencies realize a two-year operation cannot be guaranteed. There is awareness that, if this SOR is implemented, its planned operation might need to change in response to actual water supply, power system and chum spawning conditions. The specifications in the SOR would end either when kokanee spawning is done or at the end of December, whichever comes first. USFWS/IDFG will submit a SOR in 2012 requesting the MCE of 2,055 feet allowing TMT members evaluate the operation based on real time conditions.

The SOR aims to boost kokanee populations, based on data indications that there will be more adult spawners next year, Kiefer explained. Switching the decision tree at this time next winter would speed recovery as this population rebounds. The kokanee population has been growing incrementally each year since it began to recover from record lows in 2007. Rick Kruger, Oregon, said the spawning population next year could turn out to be smaller than expected. There was strong interest among TMT members in reevaluating the SOR next year in light of prevailing conditions.

In addition to spawning considerations, a graduate study project is planned for next winter that would address critical uncertainties, Kiefer said. The study depends on the lake level being high next winter. Rick Kruger, Oregon, said he can support the SOR for the sake of the kokanee population, but isn't enthusiastic about risking the downstream water supply to support a graduate study project. Kiefer emphasized that the study findings will address uncertainties and help tighten the focus of future requests regarding management of lake levels and the needs of kokanee.

Joel Fenolio, COE Seattle, gave an update on Lake Pend Oreille operations. The goal is to attain 2060 feet by the end of September. After that,

the lake will be drafted below 2051.5 feet as quickly as possible. The current draft rate is around 0.2 feet per day. Dropping to a low elevation with channel restrictions upstream means that the COE will need to draw the lake down as aggressively as possible. The Water Control Manual specifies an elevation of 2054 feet on October 31, so the COE is planning to submit a deviation request to provide more operational flexibility.

Tom Lorz, CRITFC/Umatilla asked about the potential impacts of a deviation request on operations at Grand Coulee. It's approximately a foot of elevation at Albeni Falls and a foot at Grand Coulee, Tony Norris, BPA, replied.

TMT members gave their views of the SOR. A number of them emphasized that their support is contingent on revisiting the operation next year.

- **Oregon** – No objection
- **Montana** – No objection
- **Idaho** – Co-signatory; supports SOR
- **USFWS** – Co-signatory
- **Washington** – No representation today; Paul Wagner said it's unlikely they'll object
- **NOAA** – No objection
- **BPA** – No objection
- **BOR** – No objection
- **CRITFC/Umatilla** – No objection
- **COE** – No objection
- **NP** – (Not in attendance at the meeting but no objection via phone after the meeting).

3. Operations Review

Reservoirs. Grand Coulee is at elevation 1283.5 feet, targeting elevation 1283 feet by the end of the month. Hungry Horse is at elevation 3550.82 feet, discharging 3 kcfs and aiming to hit 3550 feet at the end of September, although it may come in a bit higher than that. Libby is at elevation 2446.91 feet with inflows of 4.7 kcfs and outflows of 6 kcfs. Albeni Falls is at elevation 2060.51 feet with inflows of 11.5 kcfs and outflows of 19.5 kcfs. Dworshak is at elevation 1519.48 feet with inflows of 1.0 kcfs and outflows of 1.7 kcfs.

Lower Granite inflows are 32.7 kcfs. Priest Rapids inflows are 77.5 kcfs. McNary inflows are 118.8 kcfs, and Bonneville inflows at 116.9 kcfs.

Tom Lorz asked for an update on repairs to the Bonneville fish ladder. The current schedule calls for rebuilding and restabilizing the slope by October 31, Baus replied. The concrete grounding beneath the ladder is scheduled to be complete on October 15. According to the current schedule the repairs will not have any impacts on the chum operation.

Fish. Juveniles: Subyearling chinook are passing Lower Granite in large numbers at present, Wagner reported, with a passage index of 977 yesterday – high for this time of year. The passage index has been between 700-900 fish daily over the past week. Little Goose is passing fewer numbers – 204 fish per day a week ago and 69 yesterday. Lower Monumental passage numbers are ranging from 100-27 fish per day.

McNary passed 20,000 subyearlings on September 22, which is highly unusual for this time of year. Counts have been around 2,000 fish per day over the past five days. Bonneville is passing 500 subyearlings per day.

Adults: The total count for fall chinook adults is 359,000 for the season, down from the original forecast of 500,000. The latest seasonal forecast is 360,000 fish to date. Fish are still passing at the rate of 4,000-7,000 per day which is a lot. Steelhead passage to date is 357,000 fish. Passage counts at McNary are in line with the 10-year average for steelhead. Fall chinook passage at Lower Granite is 17,800, one of the highest runs to date.

Water Quality. Laura Hamilton, COE, reported that the switch to wintertime TDG monitoring began on September 14, and the forebay gages in Oregon are no longer transmitting data. Baus gave TMT a heads-up to expect a winter spill priority list to come up for discussion soon.

7. Next TMT Meeting

TMT will meet next in person on October 5. Beyond that, more offline discussion among TMT members is needed to establish a meeting schedule for the rest of October and November. The TMT year end review will be on December 7.

Name	Affiliation
Rick Kruger	Oregon
Tony Norris	BPA
John Roache	BOR
Doug Baus	COE
Dave Wills	USFWS
Laura Hamilton	COE
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Tom Lorz	CRITFC/Umatilla
Andy Dux	IDFG
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Joel Fenolio	COE Seattle
Steve Hall	COE Walla Walla
Jason Flory	USFWS

Shane Scott
Barry Espensen
Margaret Filardo
Richelle Beck
Rob Allerman
Bruce McKay

PPC
CBB
FPC
Grant PUD
Deutsch Bank
hydropower consultant