

# Columbia River Regional Implementation Oversight Group

## Technical Management Team

November 23, 2011 Meeting

Facilitator's Summary

### Chum Update

Paul Wagner, NOAA, provided an update that as of 11/15, 37 chum had been observed in the Ives Island area and that officially 133 chum had been observed in the recently reconstructed off channel area. Observations were somewhat hindered by excess sediment that had arrived in the area from the Condit Dam breach. Given the chum counts and current and forecasted precipitation in to the system (with nighttime flows reaching over 200 kcfs last night), the salmon managers, per an FPAC call on 11/22, recommended taking the next step described in SOR 2011-5 to adjust the tailwater elevation range to 11.7-12.5 feet. Paul acknowledged that a letter from the Colville Tribes had been sent to the Action Agencies reiterating concerns the Tribe had expressed at the 11/9 TMT meeting regarding this operation, and offered that this recommended step posed no additional risk to spring refill. The Colville Tribes were not represented on today's call.

John Roache, Reclamation, asked Paul what minimum tailwater elevation would be needed through the winter if 12.5 feet were the upper limit, to protect spawning chum. Paul said the field survey crew would be best to answer this question and provide field verification, but his initial response was that the chum need about 6 inches of water depth, equating to a minimum elevation of about 11.8 feet.

With no further questions, the action agencies weighed in on the issue: Reclamation suggested that given the water in the system, the recommended operation fits well as a way to meet the system conditions. BPA added that a precipitation event underway had already required a change to the tailwater elevation, so was not opposed to the recommendation. BPA added that this operation was consistent with the BiOp.

**Planned Operation:** The COE planned to implement a Bonneville tailwater elevation range of 11.7-12.5 feet, as requested. TMT will revisit chum operations during their call on 11/30.

## Columbia River Regional Forum

### TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM OFFICIAL MINUTES

November 23, 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 BPA, COE, NOAA, BOR, Idaho 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. Chum Operations Update***

Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported that 37 spawners have been observed in the Ives Island area as of November 15, the latest count. Since then, sediment from the Condit Dam removal has impaired visibility of the spawning grounds. Field crews observed a total of 133 fish when they included offstream channel sites (unofficial reports say there could be as many as 200 fish in the area). Such high counts mean that chum are moving into the reconstructed habitat area to spawn.

In response to recent high flows and precipitation, The project has been reverse load factoring, releasing up to 200 kcfs in an effort to keep the tailwater elevation at 12 feet during the daytime. Even then, maintaining 12 feet has become impossible, so yesterday FPAC made a recommendation to increase the range to 11.7-12.5 feet. Participants in the FPAC call included Washington, Idaho, and CRITFC. Subsequently the Colvilles sent the Action Agencies a letter expressing concerns with the proposed operation (the tribe was not represented on today's call). Wagner said he didn't think the FPAC recommendation represents much increased risk because it's probably not necessary to maintain the full 12.5 feet through the incubation period.

John Roache, BOR, asked what winter elevation would be necessary to maintain protection of the chum redds under the proposed operation. That will depend on field crew reports, Wagner replied. Chum need at least 6 inches of water for spawning and deposit their eggs at some depth below that. A winter operation of 11.8 feet or 12 feet elevation might suffice. Field crews will need to confirm this estimate based on weekly visits to the spawning grounds.

The Action Agencies responded to the proposed operation:

**BOR** – The FPAC recommendation needs to be adopted in response to natural events. Nighttime flows are now very high and will continue to be so for the next few days. Review the operation again in early December.

**BPA** – Due to ongoing precipitation, the project is already operating at the recommended elevation range, a scenario TMT previously discussed.

The **COE** will implement the recommended 12.5-11.7-foot operating range for chum, with an update in a week.

### ***3. Next TMT Meeting***

There will be a conference call November 30 to revisit the chum operation.

<b><i>Name</i></b>	<b><i>Affiliation</i></b>
Tony Norris	BPA
Doug Baus	COE
Paul Wagner	NOAA
John Roache	BOR
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Heather Dohan	Puget Sound Energy
Russ George	WMC
Russell Langshaw	Grant PUD
Rob Allerman	Deutsch Bank
Scott Bettin	BPA

Mike Shapley	Snohomish PUD
John Hart	EWEB
Dave Wills	USFWS
Bruce McKay	consultant