

COLUMBIA RIVER TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

April 1, 2015

Facilitator's Summary

Facilitator & Notes, Emily Plummer, DS Consulting

The following Facilitator's Summary is intended to capture basic discussion, decisions and actions, as well as 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.

Chum Spawning Operation

Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported on the chum spawning operation. The most recent temperature data set was received and shows that the water temperatures have reached or are near emergence temperatures. The emergence date was noted as April 2nd. Paul reiterated that, as discussed at the last TMT session, these temperatures do not reflect emergence for all chum in the area. Paul also noted that BPA solicited feedback from FPAC regarding an operation to retrieve the temperature gauge data on April 6th. The operation would require BPA to lower the tailwater to 12ft for a 4 hour window to allow for the equipment to be accessed. Scott Bettin, BPA, noted that the push to get the equipment out is not only to retrieve the data, but also to avoid putting the equipment at risk during the fishing season. Scott shared that the intent was to implement the operation after emergence and before the start of the spill season, noting that there may be a need to drop spill if the operation is postponed into the spill season.

Salmon Managers shared that they are concerned with dropping the tailwater from the current 19ft to 12ft, as it may expose or strand fish emerging from higher elevations. Salmon Managers suggested holding off on this operation until the flows have dropped for the summer, likely June. Another option suggested, however, not vetted at FPAC, is to try to get to the equipment during the low point before the spring runoff, likely in mid-April. Tom Lorz, CRITFC, suggested that TMT continue to track conditions for a more opportune time, when both flows and the risk to fish are lower. Yet another option discussed was to implement the operation on April 9th. BPA and FPAC agreed that more discussion is needed and a special TMT session may be necessary either this week or early next week. If a special session is not scheduled, TMT will revisit the chum operation at the April 8th TMT meeting.

- ACTION: BPA and Salmon Managers will continue respective discussions with the intent of finding a way to retrieve the temperature equipment while limiting potential impacts to emerging chum. Doug Baus will schedule a special TMT session either this week or early next week to discuss further if necessary.

The next TMT meeting will be a conference call on April 8th at 9:00am.

Columbia River Regional Forum
TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM—OFFICIAL MINUTES

April 1, 2015
Minutes: Pat Vivian

1. Introduction

Today's TMT conference call was chaired by Doug Baus, COE, and facilitated by Emily Plummer, DS Consulting. Representatives of NOAA, USFWS, Idaho, COE, BPA, Montana, BOR, CRITFC/Umatilla, Washington, and others participated. This summary is an official record of the proceedings, not a verbatim transcript.

2. Chum Spawning Operation Update

Paul Wagner, NOAA, reported. The latest report from Battelle on accumulation of temperature units indicates that chum fry near the floating gage have reached emergence, or they will soon. However, as discussed previously at TMT, the floating gage does not accurately represent conditions for all chum in the basin.

For that reason, Scott Bettin, BPA, requested that the Bonneville tailwater be lowered to 12 ft elevation for 4 hours on April 6 to allow data extraction from two gages. This is an important step so PNNL will be able to include updated chum data in a report to be used for the annual data submittal. The proposed elevation drop will allow researchers to examine the gages and find out how they equilibrate to the floating gage, and the resulting data will give the region the information it needs to plan future chum spawning operations. By gathering data now, river fluctuations during the spring freshet and spill season will be avoided. Because it falls four days before spill starts and four days from today, April 6 is an opportune time between emergence and 2015 passage season. It takes approximately 4 days to set the data-gathering operation up and ramp it down.

Several Salmon Managers recommended a delay beyond April 6 because chum fry are currently vulnerable to stranding in shoreline gravel beds if river levels drop. Joe Skalisky said **USFWS** recommends a delay, and that Erick Van Dyke, **Oregon**, who was not present today, shares the recommendation. Charles Morrill said **Washington** also agrees because studies indicate not much change in elevation is needed to cause significant stranding impacts. Current STP flows show that Bonneville is passing 240 kcfs, with a projected drop to 170 kcfs on April 12. If the Action Agencies must collect data now, Morrill said, waiting until April 12 would be preferable to April 6.

Tony Norris, BPA, recalled that TMT hasn't had any discussions of stranding in more than a decade, and Baus pointed out the data collection operation would be similar to that for annual removal of the Duncan Creek trap. However, that operation occurs in fall at a different time in the chum life cycle, Wagner said. It was noted that previous years' chum operations have involved Bonneville tailwater elevations of 12 ft and lower at this

time of year without raising concerns. The main reasons given for delaying data collection this time in order to maintain a 13 ft minimum Bonneville tailwater were:

- (1) Most chum fry appear to have already emerged. This year's operation and conditions have been especially beneficial for chum, putting more of them at risk of stranding.
- (2) There is no monitoring underway to identify whether chum fry are being stranded.

In response to the Salmon Managers' concerns, TMT considered two alternatives to the BPA proposal:

- (1) Deferral of temperature unit data collection at various redd locations until inflows reach a projected springtime low on April 12, as suggested by Morrill. Drawback: This option would mean a loss of approximately 20 kcfs spill for 4 hours.
- (2) Deferral until summer or late August, when inflows are naturally low and fish would not be impacted. Drawback: Leaving the sensors deployed until late summer involves the risk they will be damaged or vandalized, resulting in loss of valuable data.

The Salmon Managers present agreed that it's in the best interests of fish to wait for data collection, even if it puts equipment at risk. Russ Kiefer said **Idaho** has no management oversight of chum, but waiting until summer seems like the best option. He suggested that spill be shifted to the morning of April 12, but Skalisky said the first release of Spring Creek Hatchery smolts might happen then. **USFWS** supported waiting until summer over sacrificing spring spill. Tom Lorz said the **Umatilla Tribe** also supports waiting until summer, but he suggested that TMT stay attuned in case an opportunity arises earlier.

The Action Agencies will consider the Salmon Managers' request and report back to TMT; FPAC may also confer. There might be an unscheduled conference call tomorrow or Friday, April 3, if necessary to discuss the chum operation. Baus will notify TMT via email if a call is needed.

3. Next TMT meeting

The next regularly scheduled TMT meeting is April 8.

Name	Affiliation
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Joe Skalicky	USFWS
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Doug Baus	COE

Tony Norris	BPA
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Mary Mellema	BOR
Scott Bettin	BPA
Karl Kanbergs	COE
Steve Hall	COE
Laura Hamilton	COE
Dave Benner	FPC
Mike Shafley	Snohomish PUD
Tom Lorz	CRITFC/Umatilla
Charles Morrill	Washington