

## COLUMBIA RIVER TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

January 13, 2016

Facilitator's Summary

Facilitator: Emily Plummer; Notes: Tory Hines, 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.*

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**Chum Operation** – Tony Norris, BPA, provided an update on the chum operation. He noted that Bonneville is operating at a minimum tailwater elevation of 12.2ft, however due to recent non-treaty storage releases out of Canada, tailwater elevation has been between 13-14ft for the last few days. Considering the pending forecast and official water supply forecasts, Tony noted that the Action Agencies recommend exercising caution and trying to conserve water through future operation. Paul Wagner, NOAA, noted that members of FPAC were displeased to see elevations in the 13-14ft range, after being cautioned by AA's to reduce tailwater elevations, and then seeing elevations come back up. He noted that the release of the Canadian water was unexpected and salmon managers were caught off guard by the higher than expected flows over the weekend. Tony noted that the non-treaty storage releases are at Canada's discretion, are required to flow through the system, and are part of the agreement negotiated that allows for non-treaty water to be released during the dry years, for instance, last year.

Paul asked whether modeling or data is available to indicate when Canadian releases will occur. Tony stated that this information is not currently available. Charles Morrill, WA, asked if there were other options available rather than releasing the water through the system. He suggested holding the water and using it to refill Grand Coulee. Tony stated that appropriating non-treaty storage water for the benefit of fish is not part of the contract. He continued that the water is intended for power purposes and because it is unclear when releases will occur the Action Agencies cannot plan around those releases. Tony said that the agreement was coordinated by representatives from the States and Federal Agencies, including fisheries agencies, and Tribes. Erick Van Dyke, OR, asked what group was involved in the discussion coordinating the non-treaty storage releases? Paul noted that the non-treaty release meetings take place every six months; the next one will likely be in March, however, a date was not known. Paul recalled that during the November meeting, Pam Kingsbury, BPA, highlighted the chum operation, noting that water is released under the non-treaty agreement may impact the chum operation. *[Facilitator's Note: it was clarified through edits that the non-treaty storage water release was coordinated through the U.S. Entity.]*

→ **ACTION:** TMT members will contact Pam Kingsbury if they are interested in attending the next non-treaty release meeting and want to make sure they are on the distribution list.

Tom Lorz, CRITFC, asked whether the Action Agencies were still attempting to move the tailwater elevation down to 12.2ft. He asked whether BPA is considering holding additional flows for the benefit of Grand Coulee. Tony emphasized that those questions are better suited for a coordination call, as the information is proprietary.

→ **ACTION:** BPA will coordinate with TMT members to schedule a conference call to go over the non-treaty storage releases from Canada.

Russ Kiefer, ID, expressed concern over the coordination of the operation. He noted that the long range weather forecast follows the El Nino trend of a wet December followed by drier months. Russ recapped that the Salmon Managers submitted an SOR (SOR 2015-1) which requested a flood control deviation at Libby Dam. The Action Agencies did not implement the SOR to the full extent and in January, Libby flows were set at the project minimum. Russ continued that at the January 6<sup>th</sup> TMT meeting, the AAs indicated

that the coordinated operation of 12.2-12.5ft may not be enough of a reduction and asked SMs to consider an elevation of 11.5ft. Additionally, the AAs indicated that it would take a few days for flows to fall within the 12.2-12.5ft range; however, weekend flows rose to 13-14ft as a result of the Canadian release. Russ noted that the Canadian release was a surprise and asked for better communication and coordination moving forward.

Doug Baus, COE-NWD, stated that the Corps responded to the Libby SOR and relaxed the end of December to above 2,411ft, recognizing it was not as high of an elevation as requested; however, the decision was based off of local snowpack and flood control calculations that did not support targeting an elevation closer to an end of December elevation of 2,426 feet as specified in the SOR.

Mary Mellema, BOR, noted she is concerned about meeting the April 10<sup>th</sup> objective at Grand Coulee if a 12.2ft minimum tailwater is maintained. She continued that the volume forecast is continuing to drop and the current forecast shows that keeping the tailwater high increases the risk of not meeting the April 10 elevation objective. She asked that the Salmon Managers keep in mind lowering the tailwater to 11.5 feet to increase the probability of meeting the April 10<sup>th</sup> objective.

Joe Skalicky, USFWS, asked if there was a date set for Chum emergence, to which Scott Bettin, BPA, noted that he did not have any information yet regarding emergence, however, there will be a presentation by WDFW at the January 20<sup>th</sup> Process meeting.

Doug and Mary provided the water supply forecast:

- Hungry Horse
  - January-July 2,019kaf (96% of average);
  - April-August 1,858kaf (96% of average);
  - May-September 1,625kaf (96% of average);
  - the Columbia Falls minimum flow is 3,500cfs and flow downstream from Hungry Horse is 900cfs;
- The Dalles April-August 83maf (94% of average);
- Lower Granite April-August 20maf (94% of average);
- Libby April-August 6.2maf (99% of average); and
- Dworshak April-August 1,913kaf (79% of average)

Mary noted that the end of the month elevation at Grand Coulee is 1,290ft. Paul asked what the end of March elevation will be based on a water supply forecast holding at 93%, Mary stated that if conditions stay the same it would be 1,283.3ft.

**The next TMT meeting will be a face to face meeting at 9:00am on Wednesday, January 20th, 2016.**

**Columbia River Regional Forum**  
**TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING – OFFICIAL MINUTES**  
**January 13, 2016**

Minutes: Pat Vivian

**1. Introduction**

Representatives of Washington, Montana, Idaho, USFWS, BOR, BPA, NOAA, COE, Oregon, Yakama Tribe, CRITFC/Umatilla Tribe and others participated in today's TMT conference call. Doug Baus, COE, chaired the discussion, with facilitation by Emily Plummer, DS Consulting. This summary is an official record, not a verbatim transcript.

**2. Chum Operation**

At last week's January 6 conference call, TMT scheduled a follow-up call today to discuss the chum operation. A week ago the Salmon Managers recommended keeping the BON tail water at a minimum 12.2 ft elevation in light of dwindling water supplies, and the Action Agencies agreed to implement the recommendation.

While the chum operation is still being implemented as planned, unscheduled releases of Canadian non-Treaty storage have raised the BON tail water to elevations in the range of 13-14 ft, Tony Norris, BPA, reported. Nevertheless, the long-term outlook calls for cautious water management. Under terms of the U.S. treaty with Canada, the current releases are purely at their discretion and cannot be planned or forecasted.

Charles Morrill, Washington, asked whether any of that water could be stored at Grand Coulee for later flow augmentation. Norris said no, the releases are part of negotiations between Canada and the U.S. that also provide flows from Canada in low water years. Every six months, BPA hosts a meeting to coordinate the details of this negotiation with state, tribal and fishery representatives. Paul Wagner, NOAA, and Jim Litchfield, Montana, attended the most recent meeting in November 2015. Because other TMT representatives did not attend and were unaware of the potential for unscheduled releases from Canada, BPA will schedule another coordination meeting with them soon. Further questions about the Canadian releases should be deferred to that meeting, Norris said. There has been no impact to fish in the U.S. as a result of the Canadian releases, Scott Bettin, BPA, added.

Russ Kiefer, Idaho, said he was disappointed the Action Agencies didn't implement the SOR submitted by the Salmon Managers in December requesting a flood control deviation at Libby to counteract this year's El Nino trend. He was disappointed when Libby went to minimum flows on January 1. On January 6 the Salmon Managers were asked to consider reducing the minimum Bonneville tail water elevation from 12.2 ft to 11.5 ft due to dwindling inflows, so it was indeed surprising to see BON tail water elevations consistently exceed 13 ft over the weekend. Kiefer asked for better coordination of such releases in future. Washington and Oregon representatives both

said they consider this coordination important and would make sure their agencies are represented at coordination meetings.

The COE evaluated the SOR requesting a flood control relaxation above 2411 ft elevation at LIB and implemented it as deemed prudent, Baus recalled. The final LIB December elevation did go above 2411 ft, but since December, the water supply in the basin has taken a downturn.

According to the latest forecasts for GCL, maintaining a 12.2 ft minimum tail water below BON could jeopardize the ability to meet April 10 BiOp objectives at GCL, Mary Mellema, BOR, said. The BOR recommends a minimum BON tail water elevation of 11.5 ft to increase the likelihood of meeting the GCL April 10 elevation.

Attention turned to official January water supply forecasts throughout the basin:

- Hungry Horse (January-July) – 2019 kaf, 96% of average  
(April-August) – 1858 kaf, 96% of average  
(May-September) – 1625 kaf, 96% of average
- Columbia Falls minimum flows – 3500 cfs; 900 cfs downstream of HGH
- The Dalles (April-August) – 83 maf, 94% of average
- Lower Granite (April-August) – 20 maf, 94% of average
- Libby (April-August) – 6.2 maf, 99% of average
- Dworshak – 1913 kaf, 79% of average

In response to questions, Mellema said the January 31 flood control elevation for GCL is 1290 ft. This is not a flood control requirement because GCL doesn't have flood control requirements in January. The current end of March flood control requirement for GCL is 1283.3 ft, with around 1273 ft for April 10. BPA will contact TMT members to schedule a follow up meeting on Canadian treaty storage. TMT will revisit the chum operation next week and BPA will provide an update on chum emergence.

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

TMT will meet next in person on January 20 followed by a process meeting.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Charles Morrill	Washington
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Joe Skalicky	USFWS
Mary Mellema	BOR
Scott Bettin	BPA
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Doug Baus	COE
Tony Norris	BPA
Ryan Cahill	COE

Laura Hamilton	COE
Karl Kanbergs	COE
Erick Van Dyke	Oregon
Julie Ammann	COE
Pat Vivian	note taker
Pat Maher	Avista
Tom Iverson	Yakama
Chris Runyon	BOR
Tory Hines	DSC
Steve Hall	COE
Margaret Filardo	FPC
Dave Benner	FPC
Tom Lorz	CRITFC/Umatilla