

Corps of Engineers

Water Quality Policy

The general policies of the Corps related to water quality are summarized in the **Corps Digest of Water Resources Policies and Authorities**, Engineering Pamphlet 1165-2-1, dated July 31, 1999(USACE 1999). This Engineering Pamphlet can be found at: <http://140.194.76.129/publications/eng-pamphlets/ep1165-2-1/toc.htm>

The Corps policy is to meet water quality standards to the extent practicable regarding nationwide operation of water resources projects. "Although water quality legislation does not require permits for discharges from reservoirs, downstream water quality standards should be met whenever possible. When releases are found to be incompatible with state standards they should be studied to establish an appropriate course of action for upgrading release quality, for the opportunity to improve water quality in support of ecosystem restoration, or for otherwise meeting their potential to best serve downstream needs. Any physical or operational modification to a project (for purposes other than water quality) shall not degrade water quality in the reservoir or project discharges," (Section 18-3.b, page 18-5). The data from the Corps Dissolved Gas Monitoring Program before 1984 was used to voluntarily monitor for compliance with water quality standards. In 1984, the Corps Dissolved Gas Monitoring Program was enhanced to serve the multiple purposes stated in the Corps policies and authorities.

With the ESA listing of certain Snake River salmonids in 1991, the Corps implemented a variety of operational and structural measures to improve the survival of listed stocks. Actions included providing summer releases of available water for flow augmentation for migrating juvenile salmon where possible, and to a level of 120% TDG where State rule modifications, or waivers had been provided. This spill level has become an annual operation for the benefit of ESA listed juvenile fish.

The Corps addressed TDG and water temperature in ESA consultations with NMFS since the early 1900's. The Corps adopted the recommendations contained in the NMFS BiOps. The 2008 BiOp has set levels of spill for fish passage which will be implemented starting in 2009 using an adaptive management framework. Therefore spill levels have flexibility to change over the 10-year implementation period of the BiOp, incorporating the best available information from research to best meet BiOp performance standards and improve fish conditions.

Note: Taken from the 2009 Water Quality Plan, page 17.