

**IMPLEMENTATION TEAM CONFERENCE CALL  
MEETING NOTES  
July 19, 2001**

**PORTLAND, OREGON**

***1. Greeting and Introductions***

The July 19 Implementation Team conference call, held at the NMFS Office in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The following is a distillation, not a verbatim transcript, of items discussed at the meeting and actions taken. Anyone with questions or comments about these minutes should call Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420.

Silverberg welcomed everyone to the meeting, then led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

***2. 2001 Summer Spill Issue Elevated from TMT.***

Silverberg explained that the Technical Management Team is asking the Implementation Team to consider the following issue elevated during yesterday's TMT meeting:

**"The TMT had a very good and frank discussion today about summer spill. Because it was clear that TMT members could not make a final decision on the issue, the issue has been raised to the IT by Oregon's representative Christine Mallette and supported by the group. All members of TMT agreed with the issue being framed as follows:**

**"Can the planned Lower Columbia River flows be reallocated to provide a limited amount of spill for fish so that no additional water is used while energy is purchased elsewhere for an initial two week period?"**

This topic was the result of SOR 2001 C-6, submitted by the CRITFC tribes, Silverberg explained; the TMT members considered several alternative approaches to providing a limited summer spill program, but were unable to reach consensus.

The basic idea is that no more water would be used than that needed to meet regional load, but that this volume would be re-allocated to provide at least some spill this summer, Silverberg continued. Jim Ruff asked about the current status of the migration, as well as the specific spill levels and projects being requested.

Paul Wagner said he had reported yesterday that, according to the most recent Fish

Passage Center estimates, about 80% of the 2001 subyearling fall chinook run has passed McNary Dam to date, while about 62% of the run has now passed at John Day. We're talking about an 8 million fish index, so there are still about a 3 million fish index in the river, most between John Day and Bonneville Dam, Wagner said. With respect to the listed Snake River wild fall chinook component, there are still about 90,000 of those fish in the lower river, Wagner said. We're starting to see small numbers of those PIT-tagged fish show up at McNary, said Ruff; right now, we're estimating that about 20,000 wild Snake River fall chinook are in the lower river. There are still more of those fish to come, Ruff added.

Bob Heinith observed that more than 27 million fall chinook are estimated to be coming out of the Hanford Reach this year; those fish are now arriving at McNary at a rate of about 100,000 fish per day. The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the question of how many tributary migrants are now in the river from systems such as the Deschutes and the Klickitat.

In response to a question from Jim Litchfield, Silverberg said the last proposal discussed at yesterday's TMT meeting was to provide two weeks of spill at The Dalles and Bonneville Dams, rather than the 600 MW-months requested in SOR 2001 C-6. The basic idea was that we would start with that spill program, then revisit it after two weeks to see whether or not it was feasible to continue it, Wagner said. However, there were some objections on Bonneville's part to implementing even this limited spill program, he said.

Has anyone attempted to quantify biological benefits or power costs associated with this request? Stan Grace asked. Before we can do that, we will need a better idea of exactly what is being requested, Ruff replied.

In response to a question, Mallette went through the specific spill provisions requested in SOR 2001 C-6 – 50 Kcfs spill around the clock at Bonneville Dam, spill 30% of total river flow around the clock at The Dalles Dam, and spill 30% of total river flow 12 hours per day at John Day Dam, and spill 30 Kcfs 12 hours per day at McNary Dam. She explained that after considerable discussion, the TMT had arrived at the question which was formulated for IT consideration. The general desire, on the part of the salmon managers, was for resolution of the question of whether or not the planned flow for the lower river should be re-allocated from generation to spill, with the discrepancy to be made up through power purchases, she explained.

Grace said he is not sure how the IT could make a decision based on the limited justification he has heard so far, given the fact that the system is 1-2 MAF short of where the Council feels the region should be in terms of storage for system reliability. Howard Schaller replied that these stocks have been through the ringer already this year; they are on the edge of survival levels, and any help they can be given should be extended. Considering the heavy impact the Mid-Columbia operations have already had on the Hanford Reach fish, he said, providing some limited spill this summer will have some benefit.

Eric Bloch reiterated that it would be helpful to have some analysis of the MW-months required to implement this program. It would also be helpful to have a sense of the biological

benefits associated with this proposal, Litchfield said. We looked originally at 38 days of spill, which would benefit 50-52% of the population, said Ruff – we're now talking about 14 days, so we really don't have figures to answer your question.

Bill Maslen said that, with the low flows currently in the Lower Columbia – 75 Kcfs-100 Kcfs at Bonneville over the past week -- BPA is concerned that any fish passed through spill could be exposed to worse conditions than they would experience if no spill occurred. The fish that go through the spillway are distributed across the face of the dam, and experience good to poor conditions, while the fish that go through bypass move thousands of feet downstream to what are generally considered better conditions, Maslen said. I'm not aware of any technical discussion that has occurred weighing the benefits and detriments associated with this type of spill program under these flow conditions, he said.

Don't we need a better-defined question before we can make this decision? Grace asked. Before we tackle that, there is another question, said Doug Arndt – are the action agencies even willing to consider any sort of a spill program, given the low water conditions this summer? Therese Lamb replied that flows are expected to fall to the 75-80 Kcfs range over the next week at Bonneville; that is something to consider as we weigh this request, she said. Ruff added that the July final runoff forecast blind-sided the Regional Executives; the forecast violated the criteria under which spill could be provided, although the door was left open to reconsider spill if conditions changed enough.

Lamb replied that BPA is willing to reconsider the summer spill question, if compelling evidence of biological benefit can be presented that could outweigh BPA's system reliability concerns. Wouldn't this proposal be reliability-neutral, given the fact that it calls for BPA to purchase the power needed to make up for the storage required? one participant asked. Lamb replied that BPA is still concerned about their ability to replace river flow with power purchases, particularly during the late-summer period.

Arndt asked whether the initial two-week spill period is a hard constraint, or whether some flexibility exists; the other question is whether power is available to fulfill this request. CRITFC's Ken Johnson noted that there is currently a surplus of power available at relatively cheap prices. An ENRON participant said he can't address the concept of "reasonable" power pricing, nor can he address the adequacy of power availability. However, it is fair to say that, today, there is a lot of power available at relatively reasonable prices, he said.

Lamb said BPA is concerned about the ability of the region to achieve 28,000 MW-months of storage by October 1; they are also concerned about WNP-2, and now know that there is a pump problem which could cause that project to go down as soon as this weekend. That's 500 MW of generation per day, for at least 14 days she said, and those repairs will have to happen this month. Temperatures are 10 degrees below normal in California right now; how long is that going to continue? Lamb asked. That is our concern – how long can we sustain any spill operation given continued reliability problems?

Johnson said he is at a loss as to what to report to the CRITFC management, given the action agencies' reluctance to provide any spill even given the extremely poor conditions experienced by fish so far this year, and the fact that the NMFS BiOp calls for much higher levels of protection than have been provided so far this year. Why should we participate in future planning processes, he said, when you're unwilling even to implement the provisions of the 2000 Biological Opinion? Lamb replied that system operations so far this year have been driven by the extremely poor water year.

Rob Lothrop observed that we are now at the peak of the summer migration; if we're going to spill this summer, he said, we need to spill over the next two weeks. People on the call should be familiar with the Gilbreth data, he said.

Arndt said there is obviously some concern about the priorities laid out in the federal operating criteria; however, accepting those criteria for the moment, is there a way to provide spill through purchases without diminishing the storage the action agencies feel is necessary? It seems to me that there may be some room for discussion, said Arndt, but we need to know more about the sustainability issue. We need more information about BPA's current purchasing patterns, said Litchfield; the market will move based on what BPA decides to do.

My question is about the details of the proposed operation, said Silverberg – people are obviously concerned about the ability of BPA to purchase the power needed to sustain system reliability while providing water for spill. Bill Tweit replied that his understanding is that TMT had asked IT to decide whether there are actions that can be taken to benefit fish while still staying within the 12% loss-of-load probability range. Washington's view is that, given that concern, this is an operation we can take for fish while still staying within that acceptable level of risk, Tweit said.

What can we agree to as a starting-point? Ruff asked. If we can describe the proposal more specifically, we should be able to address both system reliability concerns and biological benefits, he said.

Why not try 50-30-30-30 for the next two weeks? Tweit asked – 50 Kcfs at Bonneville, 30% of daily average flow at The Dalles and John Day (nighttime hours only) and 30 Kcfs spill for 12 hours at McNary? Mallette noted that Oregon would prioritize spill at The Dalles over spill at Bonneville.

The question is, is there room for some creativity here? Silverberg asked. If so, then we would propose another meeting tomorrow at 9 a.m. I'll need to go back and touch base, Lamb replied – the action agencies need to go back and talk about this.

So we're talking about 30% spill 24 hours at The Dalles, 50 Kcfs spill at Bonneville 24 hours and 30% spill during nighttime hours only at John Day, Ruff said. The intent is to try this for two weeks, with no additional flow beyond what is needed to meet load? Litchfield asked. How are you going to specify that? It's a question of buying enough energy to cover the

additional flow, said an Enron representative – Enron is willing to provide that volume of power this summer, without requiring BPA repayment before this fall, he said.

Arndt reiterated his request that NMFS provide an assessment of the biological benefits of this spill program; Ruff replied that NMFS has already analyzed the benefits of 400, 600 and 800 MW-months of spill this summer in an earlier paper. Rudd Turner added that the specified spill program at Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day over the next 2 weeks would total about 193 MW-months. Ruff said NMFS will provide an updated analysis of the biological benefits associated with this spill program.

The group discussed the potential to re-run the Council staff's system reliability analysis in a more timely fashion; various participants noted that there are other items that need to be factored into a new Council analysis, notably the high cost of diesel generation and the West-of-Hatwai generation problem. I think it's in all our best interests to talk about a wholesale re-evaluation of the Council analysis, one participant observed. You currently have over 30,000 MW-months in federal storage, Bloch noted. However, the system will be at the lowest streamflows of the year between now and October, Lamb replied – the projects will have to draft to meet minimum streamflows in August and September.

So it sounds to me as if we have a more detailed proposal, said Arndt – the action agencies now need to go off and discuss what, if anything is feasible, in terms of providing a spill program this summer. I will try to get in touch with the Council staff as soon as possible, given the fact that the in-season management decision-makers need to make decisions as soon as possible, and month-old analysis is not very useful, Bloch said. There was general IT agreement that the Council should update its analysis as soon as possible.

What about the question of whether spill at these extreme low-flow conditions may create adverse biological conditions? Lamb asked. There was general agreement that this is a technical conversation that needs to occur at TMT at 10 a.m. tomorrow, with an IT conference call to follow at 1:30 p.m. Heinith suggested that, since BPA has raised the issue of the potential biological detriments of spill at these low-flow levels, they should attempt to provide scientific evidence supporting their position. It was so agreed.

Tweit added the request that, if it is not possible for BPA to provide even this limited spill program this summer, that they provide an iterative response to the SOR.

With that, the conference call was adjourned. Minutes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

Participant List:

Guy Norman, Christine Mallette - ODFW  
Johnathon Brinkman - The Oregonian  
Bill Tweit - WDFW  
Bob Heinith, Rob Lothrop, Ken Johnson, Chuck Hudson - CRITFC  
Mike O'Bryant - Columbia Basin Bulletin  
Lee Garnett - KPAM Radio  
Eric Bloch, OR NPPC  
Jeff Shields - Enron  
Stan Grace, Jim Litchfield - Montana  
Scott Corwin - PNGC Power  
John Palensky, Jim Ruff, Paul Wagner - NMFS  
Donna Silverberg - Facilitation Team  
Howard Schaller - USFWS  
Ruth Burress - PGE  
Dan Daley, Therese Lamb, Bill Maslen, Scott Bettin - BPA  
Doug Arndt, Rudd Turner - COE  
Carl Merkle - CTUIR  
Richelle Harding - Mid- C. PUD  
Tony Norris, Jim Fodrea, Ron McKown - BOR  
Steve Weiss - NCAC