

# IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

**April 4, 2002, 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.**

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES  
BOISE, IDAHO**

## ***I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.***

The April 4, 2002 meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Boise, Idaho, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The meeting agenda and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at [kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov).

Silverberg welcomed everyone to the meeting, led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda. Ruff then offered a brief statement explaining the background and purpose of the NMFS Regional Forum and Implementation Team, as well as the reason for today's meeting location, which is to "reach out" to participants, especially tribes, who do not regularly attend IT meetings.

## ***2. Comments by Tribal Participants.***

Joe Peone noted that the Colville Tribe has both anadromous and resident fish responsibilities; he said that, in his tribe's view, implementation of VARQ operations at Libby and Hungry Horse dams should help balance those responsibilities. He expressed disappointment that Congressional funding to the Corps for the Chief Joseph flow deflectors is once again not forthcoming; the Colvilles hope to find a way to fund that work through the Regional Forum process. Our hope is that it could be put into the SCT process, or possibly into the Council/BPA process, Peone said. Obviously it's a regional priority that enjoys wide support, Peone said; the tribes feel very strongly that installation of Chief Joseph flow deflectors should go forward. We would also like to figure out how to elevate some of our tribal concerns

to the IT process, to initiate government-to-government discussion, said Peone.

Larry Richards, of the Burns Paiute Tribe, said his tribe also has some concerns; however, in the absence of several key tribal representatives, he was unprepared to articulate them today. Ruff noted that today's meeting is unfortunately conflicting with several other meetings, including the Northwest Power Planning Council and CBFWA meetings elsewhere in Boise.

### ***3. Updates.***

***A. In-Season Management (TMT).*** Cindy Henriksen explained the background and purpose of the Technical Management Team. She reported that Lower Snake River spill operations for fish passage began at 6 p.m. last night, when nighttime spill up to the gas cap began at Lower Granite. Spill is planned to start at Little Goose Dam at 6 p.m. April 5; at Ice Harbor, at 6 p.m. April 11. That's because there is a three-day travel time between the Lower Snake dams, Henriksen explained. There are juvenile fish in the system; the indices at Lower Granite have increased from a few hundred fish to more than 2,500 fish in recent days. Flows are likely to increase with this warm weather, Ruff noted; that should really get the migration underway.

Henriksen noted that April 10 is the start date for fish operations (spill and flow augmentation) at the Lower Columbia projects; spill will begin at all four Lower Columbia projects on the evening of April 10, unless the TMT decides otherwise at its April 10 meeting.

Henriksen reiterated that no spill will occur at Lower Monumental this year because of the concrete repair work at that project; to offset the expected reduction in survival, the TMT has agreed to spill 24 hours a day at Little Goose Dam through May 1, as well as going to full-flow bypass at Lower Monumental through May 1.

The March final water supply forecast was better than anything we saw in 2001, not that that's saying much, Henriksen said. At Grand Coulee, the current forecast is 60 MAF, 95% of normal. The Lower Snake's April-July forecast is now 91% of average, making it one of the lowest subbasins. At The Dalles, the March final forecast is 97.3 MAF, near-normal. All of the storage reservoirs are operating to meet their April 10 flood control elevations, some drafting, some filling, Henriksen said. The April final water supply forecast will be available this Monday, she said; we're currently looking at the April early-bird, which showed above-average precipitation in the month of March, so with luck, the April final water supply forecast will go up in comparison to the March final.

With respect to current river flows, Henriksen said Lower Granite flows are currently about 60 Kcfs, with Dworshak releasing everything it can up to the gas cap and Brownlee releasing full powerhouse capacity. We're currently about 10 feet below our flood control rule curve at Brownlee, noted Roger Fuhrman. Given the fact that the freshet has not yet begun, Henriksen added, the fact that we are not currently meeting the 94 Kcfs spring flow objective at

Lower Granite is not unusual.

What does the Corps think seasonal average flows will be at Lower Granite or McNary? Ruff asked. Also, will the storage reservoirs refill this year? We think there is a 50% chance we will meet the seasonal average flow targets this year, Henriksen replied; the Corps does believe, however, that there is a very high likelihood that the headwater storage projects will refill this year. She noted that even Libby is expected to refill in 2002, but not until late July.

Jim Fodrea noted that, at Hungry Horse, the April 30 elevation target is 13 feet higher than it would normally be without VARQ. Hungry Horse is now close to that target, within three feet or so, which means outflow from that project will likely be increasing soon. In the Upper Snake, we're projecting that we will have only 200-300 KAF for flow augmentation this year, he added. The Upper Snake above Milner is not expected to refill this year, Fodrea said, which means we will likely fall short of the 427 KAF Upper Snake flow augmentation target in 2002. He added that Reclamation is pursuing some additional options to augment this volume, and that he will provide further updates at future IT meetings.

With respect to a question raised at the last TMT meeting, Fodrea explained why the runoff volume forecast for Brownlee is so much lower than for other basins. It has to do with an annual adjustment made by the River Forecast Center, Fodrea said; I haven't yet spoken to someone who can explain why it happens, but it happens every year. The only explanation I've been able to think of is that the RFC may be trying to approximate modified flows, Fodrea said; Brownlee inflow is adjusted to account for upstream storage operations in a less-than-average runoff year. What does IPC's independent forecast look like? Ruff asked. Slightly less than the 4.1 MAF (65% of average) shown in the RFC forecast, Fuhrman replied.

**B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB).** No ISAB report was presented at today's meeting.

**C. Water Quality Team (WQT).** Mark Schneider reported on the activities of a recently-formed WQT subgroup; the purpose of this group is to address 2000 BiOp Action Item 143, a review of Snake River water temperature regime to see what tools may be available to help manage water temperatures – models, available information, strategic approach to water temperature monitoring to support future modeling and real-time decision-making needs. The group includes representatives from NMFS, the Corps, EPA, WDOE, FPC and, hopefully, CRITFC, Schneider said. It is being chaired by the Corps. So far, the subgroup has been trying to articulate what is known about temperature patterns in the river, particularly Lower Granite Reservoir, Schneider said; that's the key to controlling temperatures in the system. We've developed a series of technical questions that need to be evaluated, as well as reviewing the studies that have been done to date. We will be determining whether or not, as is likely, additional modeling is needed, said Schneider, and will be producing a draft report by the end of May, articulating the key questions that need to be answered, as well as what we currently know about those questions. This subject will also be on the May 23 Water Quality Team agenda.

Peone asked whether the WQT considers Lake Roosevelt a part of the mainstem, and whether they are looking at water quality in that system. Definitely, Schneider replied – one of the organizations that is looking very closely at that question is the Transboundary Gas Group, which involves both Canadian and U.S. agencies. The WQT is also looking at that question, Schneider said, adding that Patti Stone is a very active participant in the TGG.

In response to another question from Peone, Schneider said the TGG will be discussing The BOR and Corps' EIS/VARQ study at its meeting next week in Wenatchee. This long-term Upper Columbia EIS, scheduled for completion in 2004, will include decisions about VARQ at Libby, Hungry Horse and Grand Coulee, said Jim Fodrea. Reclamation is implementing VARQ at Hungry Horse this year, which will impact the flood control elevation at Lake Roosevelt by about one foot, Fodrea said. We have also agreed to consider accelerated VARQ implementation at Libby and Grand Coulee, he added; if the decision is made to take that path, VARQ will be implemented at Libby in winter of 2003. Do the tribes support VARQ implementation? Ruff asked. Yes, very strongly, Peone replied.

***D. System Configuration Team (SCT).*** Bill Hevlin distributed Enclosure C, a package of information regarding recent SCT activities. He worked his way through this information, touching on the SCT background and purpose, implementation and major accomplishments of the FY'02 CRFM program, appropriations and prioritization for the FY'03 CRFM budget, implementation schedules for Bonneville, The Dalles and Lower Monumental project configuration, and an issue paper regarding construction of spillway flow deflectors at Chief Joseph Dam.

Hevlin noted that the Corps' Chief Joseph project does not fall under the CRFM program, because it is not one of the eight mainstem dams. The deflectors are considered a new start, currently prohibited in the federal budgetary process; thus it was not included in the FY'02 or FY'03 Presidential budgets. Congress could add it to the Corps' budget if they want to, Hevlin said, but people need to get that message to their delegations.

Ruff noted that funding to construct the Chief Joseph flow deflectors have to be added as a line-item to the Corps Seattle District budget; he said both the Corps and NMFS are willing to provide whatever information is needed to the states, tribes, PUDs and others who believe this project should go forward. Ruff added that \$800,000 is needed for Chief Joseph flow deflectors in FY'03; it will cost another \$32 million over two additional years to finish that work. He added that, in his opinion, the prospects for funding are much better this year. Hevlin said NMFS is considering adding the Chief Joseph flow deflectors as a one-time line-item.

Peone noted that the Mid-Columbia water quality issue is important to the tribes; the tribes do feel, however, that Chief Joseph should be a part of the CRFM program. We're looking at the issue of adding anadromous fish passage at Chief Joseph, he said. That option has been under consideration, Ruff agreed.

In response to a question from Peone, Hevlin said his belief is that, if the Chief Joseph

flow deflectors project is put into the CRFM mix, it would receive a high priority. He added, however, that it will have a major impact on the CRFM program; it could be that it would provide added justification to increase future CRFM funding, he said. Ruff said that, in his view, one of the key benefits of this project is the fact that it would obviate the need for incrementally more-expensive dissolved gas abatement actions at Grand Coulee; plus it would improve the dissolved gas situation all the way down the river, particularly for the PUDs in high-flow years.

So what needs to be done? Ruff asked. A strong show of support for this project expressed both to the Corps' Seattle District office and to the Northwest Congressional delegation, Hevlin replied; it would also be helpful to contact Mark Walker of the Northwest Power Planning Council staff and work with them to coordinate your comments.

Hevlin then returned to Enclosure C, working his way through the information it contains. The group also discussed planned activities in the estuary. In response to a question from Sharon Kiefer, Hevlin said the Lower Monumental stilling basin repairs will be completed in time to allow spill for the 2003 migration season.

***E. TMDL Update.*** Paul Pickett distributed copies of the draft TMDL for Lower Columbia Total Dissolved Gas (Enc. D); he then spent a few minutes describing its contents. He described the background and scope of the mainstem Snake/Columbia TMDL process, then noted that the comment period on this document closes tomorrow, April 5. The main topics of Pickett's presentation included:

- A description of water body, pollutant of concern and pollutant sources
- A description of the applicable water quality standards and numeric target
- Loading capacity
- Pollutant allocations
- Margin of safety
- Seasonal variation
- Monitoring
- Implementation planning
- Reasonable assurance
- Public participation

What happens after tomorrow – what's the next step? Ruff asked. My understanding is that this document may be modified in response to comments received; it will then be submitted to EPA for approval, Ruff said. That's correct, Pickett replied. EPA will then consult with NMFS, after which EPA will approve it for implementation, said Ruff. In response to another question from Ruff, Pickett said the states' goal is to submit the final TMDL to EPA by next month.

Ruff noted that this is just one of several mainstem TMDLs currently under development; there will be a whole series developed for both gas and temperature in the next two years, he said.

#### ***4. 2002 Water Management Plan.***

Henriksen briefed the group on the contents of the action agencies' draft 2002 Water Management Plan, touching on the following major subject areas:

- Differences between the 2002 plan and other plans, including the fact that, for the first time, the 2002 plan was developed by the action agencies, rather than the TMT, and the fact that the 2002 plan covers the entire year, rather than just the fish passage season.
- Hydrosystem and individual reservoir operational priorities, as laid out in the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion
- Transportation
- Water quality actions
- The process used to develop the 2002 WMP
- The process for response to comments
- Planned updates to the 2002 plan

When will we see the spring/summer update to the Water Management Plan? Ruff asked. Hopefully in time for discussion at next week's TMT meeting, Henriksen replied. Katherine Cheney complemented the developers of the 2002 Water Management Plan for their clarity; she also spoke briefly to the question of how the Water Management Plan fits in with the other regional plans.

In response to a question from Peone, Henriksen noted that the Corps has several studies or activities underway with respect to flood control: earlier runoff forecasts at Libby, changing to a non-fixed December flood control point, the action agencies' VARQ EIS, scheduled for completion in 2004; potential early implementation of VARQ; the larger system flood control study called for in the Biological Opinion. The latter project, expected to cost \$200,000-\$300,000 in FY'03, was not included in the President's Budget; the Corps is exploring potential alternative funding sources that will allow at least the scope of work portion of that study to go forward in 2003.

The group discussed the potential for BPA's financial constraints to impact the activities called for in the 2002 Water Management Plan, as it impacted the spill program in 2001; Ruff replied that NMFS does not expect BPA to declare a power system emergency in 2002. Henriksen said that, if future emergencies occur, the annual Water Management Plan updates do provide "offramps," or opportunities to change the operations called for in each year's Water Management Plan. Cheney added that the annual progress reports will offer an opportunity to do adaptive management if there are aspects of Biological Opinion implementation that are not going satisfactorily.

The discussion of power emergencies continued for some minutes; ultimately, it was agreed to ask appropriate Council staff members to attend a future IT meeting to discuss the Council white paper on that topic. Cheney also offered to have BPA staff attend a future IT meeting to discuss this issue, as well as an overview of BPA's rate structure and contingency

planning activities.

Henriksen noted that the full text of the 2002 Water Management Plan is available via the TMT website.

#### ***5. Update on Status and Schedule for the Council's Mainstem Provincial Review Process.***

Tom Iverson of CBFWA briefed the group on the current status of the Council's mainstem provincial review process. Very quickly, he said, the process is on schedule; we're scheduled to solicit projects for the mainstem from April 22 through May 31. The ISRP/CBFWA review will follow that solicitation, with the final Council decision scheduled for December. The May 31 date may be extended to June 3, Iverson noted.

Iverson noted that this is a targeted solicitation; BPA has enlisted CBFWA's help in targeting some specific activities, required under the BiOp, which enjoy strong regional report. That targeting has been less than successful, Iverson said; he touched on the Fisher report on gaps in the action agencies' implementation plans. What we're trying to do now is provide comments on the conclusions in the Fisher report, Iverson said; that needs to happen soon. At this point, Iverson said, it doesn't appear we will be able to send any formal CBFWA comments over to Bonneville.

Kim Fodrea said the Fisher gap analysis will be combined with the program summaries and the Council's research plan to develop a list of what BPA sees as the highest priorities. I've only got two weeks to get that done, she said, but we really feel it has to be done. We do view this as trying to highlight priorities, rather than limiting solicitations, she added.

With respect to the mainstem program amendments the Council is working on, Iverson said, they hope to release their draft amendment document in May, followed by public comment and public hearings in June and July. The amendment will be revised during August and finalized by the Council in September. It will be a different kind of amendment than the Council has produced before, Iverson said; for one thing, it will rely heavily on the BiOp RPA in many respects.

In response to a question from Peone, John Palensky said the IT is unlikely to send a letter or otherwise get involved in the Council's amendment process. We're focused exclusively on BiOp implementation, he said, and the range of views represented here is so wide that it would be difficult to reach consensus on such a letter.

#### ***6. Briefing on All-H Habitat Strategy.***

NMFS' Angela Somma led this briefing, using a series of overheads. Main topic areas included:

Background

Basic points from the FCRPS Habitat Committee (habitat work that ignores ecological context is misplaced, assessment and planning needed, in the meantime: do things that help in the short-term, etc.)

Habitat program objectives (protect existing high-quality habitats, restore degraded habitats on a priority basis, and connect them with other healthy habitats)

What the BiOp says about habitat and subbasin planning

In the meantime (short-term habitat activities – fix water diversion problems, restore habitat in priority subbasins – in Idaho, the Lemhi, Upper Salmon, Middle Fork Clearwater and Little Salmon)

Demonstrate innovative ways to get water in streams

Stem habitat loss through land acquisitions, agricultural incentive programs etc. – the goal is to protect 100 stream miles per year

BPA to fund TMDL projects with ESA benefit

The Experimental Mainstem Habitat Program

Estuary: big unknown

Implementation of the habitat RPAs in Idaho – (RPA 143: BOR to fix flow, screening and passage problems in the four Idaho priority subbasins over the next 10 years, develop and continue the Lemhi water lease agreement; RPA 150 – protect currently-productive non-federal habitat; RPA 151 – BPA to experiment with innovative ways to increase tributary flows by establishing a water brokerage; RPA 153 – BPA to fund long-term protection for 100 miles of riparian buffers per year).

Can you explain the relationship between subbasin planning and recovery planning? Cheney asked. Subbasin plans are focused primarily on habitat activities, with some hatchery activities included, Somma replied; recovery plans are much broader in scope. You might say subbasin plans are building blocks of a recovery plan, she said. The group also discussed the role of the TRTs and other aspects of recovery planning. Ultimately, Cheney suggested that it may be useful to develop a new chart showing the interactions between all of the various recovery groups and processes in the basin; there was general agreement that this would be useful, but no one volunteered to do it.

### ***7. Update on Action Agencies' FY'01 Progress Report and Status of NMFS Findings Letter.***

Chris Toole of NMFS said there is little new to report since his presentation at the last IT meeting. Cheney reported that the Action Agencies' FY'01 progress report is close to completion, perhaps two to three weeks away from submission to NMFS. It will include a main report, an appendix with detailed information on all projects, by "H", and a citizen's guide, which will serve as the executive summary for the document. NMFS will then have 45 days to produce its findings letter, Toole said, although we are hoping to release it sooner. It should be available by mid-May at the latest, Toole said.

At the groups' request, Toole repeated the highlights of his presentation on this topic from the February IT meeting (see February 13, 2002 IT notes for details). He distributed Enclosure E, a flow chart titled "Draft: General Approach to Evaluating RPA Action Status in

NMFS Findings Letter,” and spent a few minutes going through its contents. In particular, Toole focused on actions whose modified schedule or scope may reduce the effectiveness of a given RPA (the so-called “Box 3” projects.) One example of a “Box 3” project, said Toole, is Chief Joseph flow deflectors; we have lost a year of biological benefit from that RPA, based on what we assumed when we wrote the BiOp. There are about half a dozen actions that fall into this category, in all, Toole said; we will be investigating the possibility of mitigation or offsetting activities for at least some of these “Box 3” actions.

#### ***8. Discussion of Regional Forum Implementation Processes and Procedures.***

Silverberg distributed Enclosure F, the most recent draft of revised Regional Implementation Forum procedures. Silverberg noted that the IT has been discussing its purpose and guidelines since last fall; we have had a number of discussions about the procedures since October, she said, finally agreeing that Jim Ruff, John Palensky and I would re-draft the guidelines to reflect current reality. We wanted to try to get your feedback on this document at today’s meeting, Silverberg said, and to figure out where the group wants to go from here.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to this topic, offering a variety of comments and clarifying questions, many focused on the scope of the IT’s responsibilities. Jim Yost noted that he is concerned about the prospect for Implementation Teams for the non-Hydro “Hs,” in particular, for the habitat “H.” NMFS has no plans to form one, said Ruff. Yost added that, in his view, there is no need for an Executive Committee; the old one simply didn’t work, he said. Silverberg noted that, in water years like 2001, the executives are likely to get involved again; the reason she, Palensky and Ruff kept the Executive Committee in this draft of the Regional Forum procedures is mainly to provide a more formal structure for that possible interaction. After a few minutes of debate, the IT recommended that the language in the procedures regarding the Executive Committee be left in, at least for now. The relationship between the IT and the Federal Caucus could also use a bit more explanation, Cheney said. It was agreed to ask Brian Brown, chair of the Federal Caucus, to attend an upcoming Implementation Team meeting to discuss that topic.

The discussion continued in this vein for some minutes, with various IT participants offering constructive criticism on the draft procedures document. At the close of this exercise, Silverberg said she, Ruff and Palensky will produce a new draft of the procedures, and will distribute it to the IT membership prior to the group’s May meeting.

#### ***9. Next IT Meeting Date.***

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Wednesday, May 2 at NMFS in Portland, OR. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.