

Final Notes April 27, 1998

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

April 2, 1998, 9:00 a.m.-1 p.m.

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
PORTLAND, OREGON

I. Greetings and Introductions.

The April 2 meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Brian Brown of NMFS. The agenda for the April 2 meeting 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.

I. Introductions and Review of Agenda.

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

II. Updates.

A. In-Season Management. TMT chair Cindy Henriksen said the National Weather Service has completed their April early-bird forecast; it shows a slight increase from the March mid-month forecast. At Grand Coulee, the January-July forecast is now 65.5 MAF, 88 percent of normal; at Lower Granite, the April-July forecast is now 18.6 MAF, 86 percent of average. The January-July forecast at The Dalles is now 90.8 MAF, 86% of average. This new forecast reflects the fact that the first half of March was cooler and drier than normal; since then, precipitation has increased. Henriksen said the April final forecast will be available within the first 10 days of May; once it is received, the Corps will re-compute April 30 flood control elevations at all the federal projects, as well as the seasonal flow objectives at Lower Granite and McNary. Moving on, Henriksen said that, with the start of the in-season management period imminent, the Corps has begun developing weekly TMT spreadsheets, which are available through the TMT's Internet homepage. She distributed copies of the most recent spreadsheet, which is Enclosure C. In general, she said, the TMT has for all intents and purposes entered its in-season management mode.

There was an issue raised at yesterday's TMT meeting, regarding the availability of complete SSARR runs to the salmon managers, Henriksen continued. This issue was summarized as follows:

The salmon managers reiterated the requests they have been making beginning last year

for the regular and complete SSARR runs, including projected flows and elevations at all federal and nonfederal projects. They feel that the weekly flow and reservoir elevation projection spreadsheets provided by the Corps for the federal and three nonfederal projects are not detailed enough for the analysis they need to perform prior to formulating a system operation request. The complete SSARR runs contain daily information at all projects in the system, while the spreadsheets only contain weekly information at selected projects.

The Corps is not willing to address this issue of providing the SSARR runs at this time, as administrative closure on this issue is still being worked out in-house, with a letter out to NMFS contemplated by the end of this week. The Corps expects to see this issue resolved soon through the planned exchange of correspondence with NMFS.

Apparently there was a misunderstanding at last week's TMT meeting, Henriksen explained – what the Corps agreed to do was complete the long-term runs, in cooperation with the National Weather Service, on Fridays, and have the regular TMT spreadsheet available on the TMT homepage by noon Monday. It was also agreed that we would develop another long-term SSARR regulation early in the week, to be used as the basis for a second TMT spreadsheet, which will be posted to the TMT homepage as early in the day on Tuesday as possible, Henriksen said.

The misunderstanding boils down to the fact that some parties left the TMT meeting thinking that the Corps intended to post the complete SSARR regulation on the TMT homepage, Henriksen continued – that was never our intention. This subject has come up in the past, she said; last November, the Corps received a letter from Brian Brown requesting the SSARR information. In response to the NMFS request, the Corps polled all federal and non-federal agencies for which there is information in the SSARR runs; we have now received responses to that poll, and were preparing a letter response to Brian's request – we had hoped to have that available last week, but Doug Arndt, who is principally formulating the Corps response, has been ill, Henriksen said.

At yesterday's TMT meeting, this subject arose again, and I did not feel comfortable discussing the contents of the Corps' letter response to the NMFS request at that time, Henriksen said. I think I can now say that the gist of the Corps' response is that, based on the results of our poll, it appears that the non-federal parties are amenable to having the long-term SSARR regulation sent to NMFS, with the understanding that they are doing this as part of their regional stewardship, in support of the Endangered Species Act. However, they ask that the information remain within NMFS, and not be distributed further, she added.

Are you saying that the state fishery managers would have no access to this information – that it would be confidential, within NMFS? asked one meeting participant. The non-federal parties were pretty clear that they wanted this information to remain within NMFS, Henriksen replied.

The concern on the part of the salmon managers is that the weekly TMT spreadsheet is part of the information, but it is not sufficient to allow us to fully understand what the projected operations are, said FPAC chair Jim Nielsen of WDFW. That is why we have been asking for the SSARR run itself – in the past, that information has been made available to the salmon managers. However, it is not available now, despite repeated requests, and it has become

difficult, if not impossible, for the salmon managers to develop a system operational request that has any basis in the planned operation, he said.

What was the basis for the non-federal parties' insistence that this information be restricted to NMFS? asked Nielsen. With federal deregulation of the energy market, the non-federal parties do not want that type of information released to the general public, because that would give other marketers an unfair advantage, Henriksen replied. At Brown's request, Henriksen said the Corps will provide NMFS copies of the responses it received from individual utilities.

If the Corps can provide me their response to my letter, as well as a list of the utilities the Corps' letter was sent to, and copies of the responses you received to that letter from the individual utilities, then I should have everything NMFS needs to contact the utilities directly and address the question of involving other salmon managers in the review of this information, in a timely way, for in-season management, Brown said.

I should also point out that the Corps and the Bureau of Reclamation are willing to supply the SSARR information on the federal projects, Henriksen said – when we make decisions within in-season management, we work within the federal projects. Although we have offered to make that information available, apparently that is not acceptable to the salmon managers. So you are going to make the federal project SSARR information available – yes or no? Brown asked. We will provide that information, beginning next week, replied Witt Anderson. When that information is provided is also very important, in terms of the timely development of SORs, said Brown – when will that information be available? We agreed to try to have the Friday SSARR regulation available by noon on Monday, Henriksen replied, and the Monday regulation as early in the day as possible on Tuesday.

So beginning next Monday, we will get SSARRs for the federal projects, distributed to all of the TMT participants? Brown asked. Yes – we will distribute that information via email, Henriksen replied – there is no intention to put the SSARRs on the TMT homepage, because that is proprietary information for BPA. The Tuesday SSARR run will also be distributed via email only? Brown asked. Yes, Henriksen replied.

So if the Corps can provide the SSARR data on the federal projects as you have just described, said Brown, and can provide SSARR information on the non-federal projects separately to NMFS, then we can address the question, raised earlier, of what need exists for non-federal project information. If that need exists, NMFS can take it up with the individual utilities concerned. If there are instances where non-federal project information is needed for in-season management, or in the development of an SOR, NMFS will request that we be allowed to share that information, Brown said.

At Nielsen's request, Brown agreed to place an update on this topic on the next IT meeting agenda.

USBR's Michael Newsom observed that it would probably be much more useful for the salmon managers to look at the actual, historical operating data from the federal and non-federal projects from the week previous, rather than the SSARR forecast data, in developing their SORs – it was my experience, while working for NMFS, that that daily information was much more valuable for that purpose than the SSARR runs were, he said. A lot of that historical information is

available over the Internet right now, he said -- it may be that the Corps can make historical information from a wider array of federal and non-federal projects available, if requested by the salmon managers. The problem is that the projected daily operations in the SSARR are often not very accurate -- they're the best guess the project operators have at the time the regulation is initialized.

After some minutes of further discussion, Brown summarized the outcome of this agenda item by saying that the Corps will provide the Friday SSARR runs for the federal projects, to the salmon managers, via email, by Monday noon. If there is a revision to those SSARR runs on Monday, due to changing conditions, the Corps will provide an updated SSARR to the salmon managers as early in the day as possible on Tuesday, again, via email. If there is no change, and the Corps is not running a revised SSARR and is not going to be talking from a different set of numbers than the one provided to the salmon managers on Monday at the Wednesday TMT meeting, then I don't see the need to go beyond that, said Brown.

It may also be useful, as Michael Newsom suggests, to take a look at what historical project information is readily accessible, as well as what information is not presently readily accessible, Brown continued. The Corps has agreed to provide a written response to NMFS' request for this information, together with copies of the responses to their letter to the non-federal project operators. Finally, said Brown, the Corps will be providing the SSARR runs for the non-federal projects to NMFS only, presumably on the same schedule as the federal SSARR runs; NMFS will then pursue the release of whatever portion of that information is needed by the salmon managers with the appropriate project operators. Also, once the Friday SSARR regulations are completed, the Corps will produce the weekly TMT spreadsheet and put it on the homepage as early in the day as possible on Monday, Henriksen said. We will provide an update on this subject at the next IT meeting, Brown added.

B. Plan for Analyzing and Testing Hypotheses (PATH). No PATH update was presented at today's meeting.

C. Integrated Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). No ISAB report was presented at today's meeting.

D. Dissolved Gas Team (DGT). DGT co-chair Mark Schneider of NMFS reported that the DGT's comprehensive dissolved gas research plan is now in partial draft form. The document now covers essentially everything except the Corps DGAS-related research; that section of the plan has been produced, but is currently being revised. The revised DGAS section should be available tomorrow, Schneider said. Once that section has been incorporated into the plan, we will have a first draft of the comprehensive dissolved gas research plan, which will be distributed initially for DGT review. The next DGT meeting is scheduled for April 17.

There is another dissolved gas research-related activity that I wanted to bring to the IT's attention today, Schneider continued -- at a recent meeting, the Power Planning Council assigned CBFWA the task of developing a dissolved gas research plan. The individuals assigned to develop that plan are Alec Maule and Tom Backman, Schneider said. An outline of the CBFWA plan is due back to the Council by April 25; the final plan is to be submitted by June 15.

My concern about this Council assignment to CBFWA is the potential that we will wind up with

two separate, competing dissolved gas research plans, Schneider said. I would like to avoid that, if possible, so what we're going to try to do is have the Dissolved Gas Team work side by side with the CBFWA effort, to develop a single dissolved gas research plan. We want to use the DGT as the arena in which to discuss the development of the project Maule and Backman have been assigned, he explained.

So the DGT has developed a dissolved gas research plan, which will be essentially complete, in first-draft form, prior to your April 17 meeting, said Brown; in addition to that, the Council has asked CBFWA to develop a research plan, and Maule and Backman, who are also participants in the DGT process, have been asked to develop that plan? That's correct, Schneider replied. I should add that Alec, too, would like to end up with a single dissolved gas research plan. But it will need to be approved by CBFWA? asked BPA's Dan Daley. That's correct, Schneider replied. CBFWA has also made it clear that, in order to facilitate CBFWA's acceptance of whatever plan is developed, they would like Margaret Filardo of the Fish Passage Center to be directly involved in its creation, he added.

E. System Configuration Team (SCT). SCT co-chair Bill Hevlin reported that SCT and the Corps' Fish Facilities Design Review Work Group have been working together to design an operation for this spring's surface bypass collector test at Lower Granite Dam that provides the operations needed by the researchers, while at the same time providing spill for fish passage at the project. He distributed Enclosure D, a table showing proposed powerhouse and spill operations at Lower Granite, which represents a compromise between those two objectives (please see Enclosure D for details of the proposed operation).

At yesterday's FFDRWG meeting, it was agreed that this is the operation that will be implemented during the test, Hevlin continued – basically, once total flow at Lower Granite reaches 77 Kcfs, there was agreement on the total spill levels and the turbine operations. Essentially, the researchers would like to see relatively consistent turbine operations throughout the spring test, he said. He added that Lower Granite Unit 2 is out of service for unscheduled maintenance, probably through June.

So below 77 Kcfs total flow at Lower Granite, are you saying that there is not agreement on the project operation, so some in-season tinkering may be required? Brown asked. Yes, said Hevlin – if flows continue to be low during the last two weeks in April, there may be an issue for TMT to deal with, because once Lower Granite flow hits 72.2 Kcfs, the researchers would like to reduce spill from 15 Kcfs to 5.8 Kcfs, and put that 9.2 Kcfs, which otherwise would have been spilled, through the powerhouse. This will only be an issue if flows at Lower Granite get stuck in the low-70 Kcfs range for an extended period, Hevlin said -- it won't be an issue if runoff and flow gradually increase, because, according to this protocol, every incremental increase in Lower Granite flow past 72.2 Kcfs will pass the project as spill.

In response to a question, Hevlin said the spring SBC test period is April 13 through May 27; we will take a look at the results from the spring test before making a decision about when – and whether – to conduct a summer SBC test at Lower Granite, he explained.

III. Report on Executive Committee Discussion of the Decision Process Memo and Next Steps.

At the March 26 Executive Committee meeting, I laid out the recommendations from the Decision Process Coordinating Group that I had previously presented to the IT, said Ed Sheets, DPCG coordinator. I think the short summary is that, with a couple of changes, the EC was comfortable with the idea of beginning a public review process, and that the process and schedule included in the DPCG's recommendation were the right place to begin those discussions, said Sheets.

The specific changes that came out of the meeting included a request from Mike Field that the goal be changed to include the Columbia Basin ecosystem; everyone seemed to be agreeable to that, said Sheets. The other suggestion from the meeting was that the public review process on the decision process recommendations be a joint Executive Committee/Power Planning Council effort; Field has already talked to the other Council members about this, and there appears to be considerable interest in making this a joint effort – send it out for public review, and take comments on the best way to proceed on this issue. There are still a lot of details to be worked out, said Sheets, but the general concept seems to be that the DPCG recommendations paper would be sent out broadly to the region, under a cover letter signed jointly by Will Stelle and John Etchart. In general, there was a good discussion at the EC meeting of the issues raised by the paper, but there were no other specific changes proposed at that time. The EC consensus seemed to be that it would be worthwhile to use the DPCG's recommendations to stimulate regional discussion of the decision process, and to get that review underway as soon as possible, he said – perhaps as early as next week.

After some minutes of further discussion, Jim Yost said there is considerable concern in Idaho about the additional flow augmentation alternative currently under consideration for the 1999 decision – Idaho has never offered to provide any extra water for flow augmentation, and I would like to get that clarified, he said. I would like to clear up any misunderstanding, he continued, because Idaho is not offering a single drop of additional water -- we may want to have a meeting in Boise to clarify some of these issues. Yost said he would confer with Mike Field about the need for such a meeting.

In response to a question, Sheets said that, if there is a clear indication of interest from the IT, he would be willing to commit to trying to schedule some decision process review meetings, targeting the interest groups around the region who are most interested in the decision process. You could also offer that opportunity in the cover letter, suggested Witt Anderson. To me, it seems obvious that the DPCG should commit some time to developing this review process, particularly once you receive further input from the Council.

It sounds like the action, then, is for me to talk to the Council about how they want to proceed with this regional review, said Sheets; it may be possible to get a letter out between now and the next DPCG meeting, offering an opportunity for briefings and consultation. It also sounds as though there is considerable interest in this subject in Idaho, and we can follow up on that. I will also follow up with the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, the Columbia River Alliance, the fisheries and environmental groups and others who have been active in these issues to see whether they want briefings or consultations, Sheets said. If the other states would like briefings or consultations, he added, we will be happy to oblige. I would think that the Council's public affairs staff will have some suggestions as well, said Brown.

IV. Comments and Discussion on Draft Steelhead Biological Opinion.

As I mentioned at the last IT meeting, said Brown, the comment period for the 1998 draft supplemental Biological Opinion is open until tomorrow. I assume that we will be getting comments from most of the entities represented at this table, he said, and I am also open to the discussion of any issues you would like to bring up today. Idaho's comments will be submitted tomorrow, said Yost; we have identified some issues. Jim Hoff of WDFW said Washington will also be providing comments. Yost said the issues Idaho has identified include the concern that there will be a request for additional flows from the Snake River system to benefit steelhead; I don't want anyone to be under the delusion that there will be any offer, on the part of Idaho, to provide more than the 427 KAF that is already being provided, Yost said. The legislation that allows the 427 KAF to be provided expires next year, he added, and it will be a legislative issue next January – there are strong feelings about that in southern Idaho.

Are there any specific provisions in the revised proposed action that are fueling the concern that more water will be requested out of Idaho for steelhead? Brown asked. It has always been our understanding that the preferred alternative to be included in the 1998 supplemental Biological Opinion would not require additional flows out of Idaho, other than those currently contained in the 1995 BiOp, Yost replied -- however, there is language in some of the comments that have been distributed that cause us some concern. In terms of the specific language contained in the draft supplemental BiOp, our concerns are mainly semantic ones, he continued – for example, there is language in the draft that says you're after more normative river conditions, or a more natural hydrograph. We think there are ways to provide a more natural hydrograph without calling for additional flows from Idaho, Yost said.

The other issue we will address in our comments is Idaho's position that we would like to spread the risk, Yost continued. We will be providing an alternative for consideration, which involves no transportation at Lower Monumental, he said. The primary objective is a spread-the-risk approach to steelhead transportation.

V. Update on Facilitation Services.

Brown said the request for proposals has now been sent out, with a response due back to BPA by April 10. Alan Ruger of BPA is in the process of setting up a conference call with those interested in participating in the evaluation team, with the goal of setting a date for a meeting of that team some time in mid-April, once the responses have been received.

VI. Next IT Meeting Date and Agenda Items, Approval of March 5 IT Meeting Minutes.

The March 5 meeting minutes were approved without comment. The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Thursday, May 7 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at NMFS' Portland headquarters. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.