

# IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

**May 2, 2002, 9:00 a.m.-4 p.m.**

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICE  
Portland, Oregon**

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

The May 2, 2002 meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, 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.

## ***2. Updates.***

***A. In-Season Management (TMT).*** Cathy Hlebechuk reported that, now that the in-season management period has begun, the TMT has been meeting at least every other week. There was a TMT conference call on April 30 to discuss Grand Coulee operations; we were unable to reach agreement on an operation, so that discussion will continue later this morning, she said.

We've also been working on the 2002 Water Management Plan and the spring/summer update, both of which should be finalized soon, Hlebechuk continued. McNary flow averaged

217 Kcfs over the past week, somewhat less than the 246 Kcfs BiOp flow target. The BiOp objective at Lower Granite is 97 Kcfs, but flows have been at 60 Kcfs over the past week. In general, natural flows are receding, Hlebechuk said; we're waiting for the freshest to begin and flows to pick up again.

The action agencies have received an SOR from the Fish and Wildlife Service, requesting 8 Kcfs from Libby for bull trout flows beginning May 15, Hlebechuk said; we will then ramp up to the sturgeon pulse, with flow at Bonners Ferry reaching 20 Kcfs by the third week in June. The plan is then to ramp down to 15 Kcfs by July 6, followed by several more weeks of 8 Kcfs bull trout flows. The Corps will also be conducting a spill test at Libby, up to 120% TDG, during that same time, Hlebechuk said.

On the Snake, we had a load rejection on April 30 at Lower Granite, Hlebechuk continued; we lost all units at that project except Unit 6. We're working to get units 2, 3 and 4 back on-line, a process that will include electrical and CO2 testing; Unit 1 is even more complex, and will require breaker repair, she said. We don't know how long it will be before Units 2, 3 and 4 are back online, she said; the most recent estimate I heard was this Sunday, May 5. We are operating Unit 6 within 1% peak efficiency during the day, and spilling up to the gas cap. We spilled last night to get some additional water out; probably thanks to the RSW, we were able to spill up to 55 Kcfs without exceeding 120% tailrace TDG, Hlebechuk said.

Ruff noted that this unit outage is throwing a monkey wrench into the planned RSW test; obviously, he said, we would like you to restore Lower Granite to normal operations and continue with RSW testing as soon as possible. We're doing our best, Hlebechuk replied.

We also had a problem this morning with Bay 1, where the RSW is, she continued; it had to do with a trash/shear boom that was pushing against the RSW. The RSW is expected to be back on-line later this morning, she said.

What's the status of the spring/summer update to the Water Management Plan? Ruff asked. As far as I know it's OK with everyone, Hlebechuk replied; it is in the process of being fleshed out more completely, and the current version has been posted on the TMT website. We have also received various SORs from CRITFC regarding their ceremonial and commercial fishing seasons, she said, requesting stable pool elevations at Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day pools; we've been doing our best to implement them.

What about the prospects for refill at all of the storage projects? Ruff asked. Libby is the main question mark, Hlebechuk replied; 6.3 MAF is the current forecast, which should leave us in OK shape, given the fact that the Corps feels 5.5 MAF is the minimum needed to both refill the project and meet the requested sturgeon and bull trout flows. Jim Athearn said his understanding is that the current refill odds at Libby are 50/50.

Dworshak is at elevation 1515, 85 feet from full, and releasing full powerhouse capacity,

Hlebechuk said. If the freshet begins and we're able to reduce Dworshak outflow to minimum by mid-May, she added, the project will refill by the end of June. I'm much more confident about refill at Dworshak than I am at Libby, she added. Jim Fodrea said Reclamation expects Hungry Horse to refill in early July; the project is currently at 3515 feet and releasing minimum flow. We got a 250 KAF head start because of the implementation of VARQ this year, Fodrea said. He added that the Environmental Assessment FONSI on the early implementation of VARQ at Hungry Horse is now available via the Reclamation website. In response to a question from Ruff, Hlebechuk said the Fish and Wildlife Service SOR includes a provision to reduce bull trout flows from 8 Kcfs to 6 Kcfs if the May final forecast goes down and refill becomes less likely.

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

***C. Water Quality Team (WQT).*** See Agenda Item 4, below.

***D. System Configuration Team (SCT).*** No SCT report was presented at today's meeting.

***E. TMDL Update.*** No TMDL update was presented at today's meeting.

### ***3. Action Agency 2001 Progress Report.***

Kim Fodrea reported that the action agencies are planning to submit their progress report to NMFS on either May 10 or May 13; shortly after, it will be emailed out to the other agencies. BPA can provide a briefing on both the progress report and the dry-year plan at the June IT meeting, Fodrea added. Will there be a citizen's guide to the progress report? Ruff asked. Yes, Fodrea replied. Because the Council is updating its Northwest Power Plan at the moment, said Ruff, we're also hoping John Fazio can brief the IT about the reliability studies that are feeding into the Council plan. Bruce Suzumoto said he will pass that request along to Fazio.

In response to a question from Jim Fodrea, Ruff said NMFS has begun working on its findings letter; we hope to complete that letter prior to the allotted 45 days, Ruff said, but I don't have a specific date for you at this time. He said he will put a placeholder for a status report on the findings letter on the June IT meeting agenda.

### ***4. Report on the Water Quality Plan Development Group.***

Ruff said there was a meeting of this group last week; this item refers to a BiOp requirement from Appendix B to develop a water quality plan for the mainstem Columbia and Snake rivers. We called a meeting of the federal operators and other sovereigns and project operators, including the Mid-Columbia PUDs, and used CBFWA's mainstem water quality summary as a starting-point, Ruff said. That summary includes all present and future water quality projects; a short-term goal of this effort is to help inform the CBFWA solicitation process for the Mainstem Provincial Review process, Ruff said. The summary is essentially a laundry

list of projects with no priorities or schedule.

The first meeting was well-attended, including state and tribal participants; we broke the agenda into two parts: short-term and long-term, Ruff said; the goal of the short-term assignment was to see if the group could agree on which water quality projects should be identified as high-, medium- and low-priority. The next meeting of the group was set for May 30, here in this room, he said. The long-term goal is to develop a mainstem system water quality plan. We've set a November check-in date to see whether or not we're making adequate progress toward that goal, he said; if not, we'll disband.

Kim Fodrea observed that the mainstem province project solicitation closes June 3; if this group isn't going to meet again until May 30, she said, that is a bit problematic. Ruff replied that the group is aware of that deadline, and plans to submit a letter to help inform the Council's deliberations once the solicitation closes. Fodrea added that BPA has taken a stab at setting mainstem project priorities; although that prioritization wasn't very well-received in the region, Bonneville felt it was necessary to attempt to provide some guidance, at least on the highest-priority projects.

Silverberg said that, in her view, this new group is roughly the equivalent of a water quality Implementation Team – mid level management and policy people, in essence.

#### ***5. Report on Results to Date of the Columbia River Tangle Net Fishery.***

Bill Tweit said this is essentially a status update on the tangle net fishery; he distributed an update report (Enclosure C). Tweit made the following main points:

- The purpose of tangle nets is to enable commercial fishers to catch target species or stocks with minimal mortality to other fish.
- There are three main aspects to tangle net fisheries: the net, the recovery box and short soak. "Short soak" refers to the fact that the nets are left in the water for no more than 45 minutes; the recovery box is a shelter in which bleeding and/or disoriented non-marked fish are allowed to recover before being released, in order to reduce the incidence of predation on released fish. Training and best fishing practices are important. In terms of results from the 2001 tangle net fishing evaluation by Oregon and Washington, this feasibility study was funded by BPA, and involved both short-term and long-term mortality investigations. The final report for the long-term mortality study was recently completed (abstract attached). The final report from the short-term mortality study is still in the process of completion.
- Based on the results from those studies, Oregon and Washington implemented the tangle net as the only allowable fishing technique in the lower Columbia River in spring 2002. BPA funded a three-part study in 2002: repeating the 2001 evaluation of short-term and long-term mortality, and providing a higher level of monitoring of the commercial fishery.

- The 2002 commercial fishery ran February 25-March 27, and harvested 14,800 marked spring chinook with an ex-vessel value of over \$1 million. Fishers encountered and released 15,000 unmarked chinook and 21,600 steelhead (60% unmarked). Monitoring was extensive, with 16 observers monitoring 316 boats and 806 drifts (a briefing and fact sheet for the Oregon Commission are attached)
- Both the long-term and short-term mortality studies for 2002 have begun; in the long-term study, as of May 1, 1,056 spring chinook have been captured and tagged in the 4.5" net and 1,734 spring chinook in the 5.5" net. A total of 32 steelhead have been captured in the 4.5" net and 19 steelhead in the 5.5" net.
- What will happen in 2003? Barring unexpected results from the mortality studies, Oregon and Washington will continue with the tangle nets as the gear for commercial spring chinook fisheries. We expect much lower spring chinook abundance in 2003, and anticipate a tangle net fishery that will likely concentrate on Willamette stocks more than upriver stocks. Revisions will probably be made to reduce steelhead encounters.
- With respect to results from the 2002 mortality studies, said Tweit, overall, switching to the tangle net, coupled with short soaks and appropriate fish handling, is a viable selective harvest gear for the commercial gill net fleet fishing for spring chinook salmon on the Lower Columbia because the post-release mortality on non-target stocks can be greatly reduced compared to a conventional gill net.

Jim Athearn noted that, since the tangle nets have been in the water, fish counting personnel at the projects have noted a significant increase in the incidence of net marks on the fish passing the dams. There is concern about the survival of the net-marked fish to the spawning grounds, Athearn said. That's good information, said Tweit; it's all a part of the learning curve for this project. John Palensky noted that he would expect to see the incidence of net markings to go up, simply because, in the past, fish that were caught in the nets were virtually all killed.

In response to a question from Palensky, Tweit said one of the disappointments of this program was the fact that Oregon and Washington failed to coordinate vigorously with the tribal fishers; he stressed, however, that this is simply a management tool the states have chosen to implement, and may or may not be appropriate for the tribal fishery. We certainly will continue to share the information generated by our studies with the tribes, Tweit said, and will continue to extend invitations to tribal fishers to observe this gear in action.

Tweit asked that any additional independent field observations relating to the tangle net fishery, such as the Corps' net mark observations, be passed directly along to him. He also extended an invitation to anyone who would like to ride along with either the short-term or the long-term mortality study fishing boats, to observe the nets for themselves, asking interested parties to contact him directly.

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

You will recall that we discussed this topic at the April IT meeting in Boise, Silverberg said; she distributed the most recent draft of the “Purpose and Procedures” document, dated April 29, which incorporates all of the comments made at the last IT meeting. Basically, we wanted to give anyone who was not at that meeting a chance to provide any suggested changes at today’s meeting, Silverberg said. Athearn went through a few minor editorial changes, including the replacement of the words “Implementation Team” with the acronym “IT.” A lengthy discussion ensued, with various other participants offering suggested refinements to the purpose and procedures statement language, which Silverberg promised to incorporate into a final draft of this document. Once those changes are made, the IT agreed that the “Purpose and Procedures” document will be considered final.

#### ***7. Next IT Meeting Date.***

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Thursday, June 6 at NMFS in Portland. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.