

**WATER QUALITY TEAM MEETING NOTES**  
**February 10, 2004**  
**NOAA Fisheries Offices**  
**Portland, Oregon**

***1. Introductions and Review of the Agenda.***

Mark Schneider of NMFS, WQT co-chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting, held February 10 at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was facilitated by Robin Harkless and co-chaired by Russell Harding of ODEQ. The meeting agenda and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B. Please note that some of the enclosures referenced in these meeting notes may be too lengthy to routinely attach to the minutes; please contact Kathy Ceballos (503/230-5420) to obtain copies.

***2. Summer Spill Alternatives and Offsets – A Discussion From a Water Quality Perspective.***

Harkless began by noting that all of the materials relating to the summer spill evaluation are available via hotlink from the agenda for the TMT's February 4 meeting on the TMT website. John Palensky then briefed the WQT on the status of the ongoing summer spill alternatives and offsets evaluation, noting that a more complete version of this presentation was provided to the Power Planning Council on January 21 and, subsequently, to the TMT, IT and the Regional Executive committee. Palensky explained that the summer spill evaluation arose from the mainstem amendments adopted by the Council in the spring of 2003, which, among other measures, directed the action agencies to study less-costly, equally biologically effective alternatives to the summer spill program. Basically, the Council wants to know if the region can provide those biological benefits in a different, less-costly way, Palensky said.

Palensky moved on through the presentation, touching on the following major topic areas:

- The various alternatives evaluated
- The approach to the biological analysis component of the evaluation
- The biological and cost savings impacts of the various alternatives under evaluation
- Percent juvenile survival change of summer spill reduction alternatives (graph)
- The estimated number of adult returns, by stock, for each alternative under consideration
- Which stocks would be most affected by reductions in summer spill (impacts would be most significant for unlisted stocks such as Hanford Reach fall chinook, because of the

- high percentage of listed juveniles transported)  
• Potential biological offsets for summer spill reduction

Palensky noted that, from a WQT perspective, this evaluation may not have a major impact, because the effects of the summer spill program on water quality are generally minimal. He said it is not yet known which alternative will guide 2004 summer spill operations; that decision will be made by the Regional Executives some time in late March, once comments have been received from the other regional sovereigns. Comments were originally due by this Friday, February 13; in response to comments received, BPA is revising the biological analysis, and comments are now due by February 20.

What is the tribal role in this process? Paul Pickett asked. The Nez Perce Tribe and CRITFC have both submitted written comments, the upshot of which is that they are not in favor of reductions in the BiOp's summer spill program, Palensky replied. The Alaska Trollers' Association has also submitted comments, he said. Bob Lohn has already stated that NOAA Fisheries will require a high level of regional agreement if the Biological Opinion flexibility to implement a summer spill reduction is to be exercised, Palensky said. A BPA representative observed that, ultimately, the authority to make this decision lies with the federal action agencies. Palensky noted that one major criticism is that the numbers in the biological portion of the analysis appear to be presented as absolutes – a gain of 24 adult returns at a cost of \$77 million, for example -- while, in reality, there should be substantial uncertainties and confidence intervals around those numbers.

The group discussed the duration of whatever reduction in summer spill may result from this evaluation – 2004 only, or future years as well? A BPA representative emphasized that, at this point, that question is still under discussion, and will ultimately be decided by the Regional Executives. Schneider said he will send an email informing the WQT when the updated supporting information is available. In the meantime, Palensky invited anyone with questions about the summer spill evaluation to contact him directly.

In response to a question from David Wills, Schneider reiterated that today's presentation was primarily informational in intent; the changes to the summer spill program that may result from this analysis are not expected to have a major impact on water quality in the Snake/Columbia system.

### ***3. Lake Roosevelt/Mid-Columbia TDG TMDL.***

Prior to today's meeting, Pickett sent out an email containing various documents related to the Lake Roosevelt/Mid-Columbia TDG TMDL. The public comment period on this TMDL opened today, Pickett said; the period ends March 18. He noted that the draft TMDL documents are available via the WDOE website: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0403002.html>. Pickett noted that, in general, this TMDL is very similar to the Lower Snake River TDG TMDL. The geographic area covered by the TMDL extends from the Canadian border to the Snake's confluence with the Columbia.

Pickett went briefly through the contents of the Lake Roosevelt/Mid-Columbia TDG TMDL, including waiver criteria, allocations for fish passage and non-fish passage, Lake Roosevelt allocations, the temporal boundaries of the TMDL, the implementation plan associated with the TMDL, the schedule of public meetings on the document, the process for deciding the details of TMDL implementation, and the potential need for an advisory group – possibly the WQT.

Has WDOE's dispute with the Colville Tribe over issuing TDG waivers been resolved? Jim Irish asked. It hasn't, but the TMDL has been written in such a way that the waiver criteria can be applied in that stretch of the river, Pickett replied – we lay out the waiver criteria, but we also make it clear that it will be up to the tribe as to whether or not to issue a waiver. The tribe can issue the waivers, Pickett said – whether or not they do so is up to them. To a certain extent, it is a resource issue, Pickett added.

Pickett asked that any written comments from the WQT or its members be submitted to Ann Butler (WA Dept. of Ecology, PO Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600). Comments can also be submitted via email at [anbu461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:anbu461@ecy.wa.gov). In response to a question, Pickett said WDOE would like to submit the final Lake Roosevelt/Mid-Columbia TDG TMDL for EPA approval by mid-June.

#### **4. Updates.**

**A. John Day Tailwater Gauge Removal** Jim Adams said the Corps' 2003 year-end TDG report is now complete and will be sent out soon. He asked each WQT participating agency to contact him via email to let him know how many copies they need at [james.r.adams@yusace.army.mil](mailto:james.r.adams@yusace.army.mil). Second, he said, with respect to the John Day tailwater gauge removal, that doesn't mean we're removing all of the gauges at that site – only one of them. In response to a question, Adams said that, historically, the two gauges have reported very similar values. Basically, it is a redundant gauge under our new QA/QC procedures. Third, the Corps' Plan of Action for 2004 TDG monitoring has now been finalized, and will be available via the TMT website within the next day or two. Finally, he said, the Water Quality Plan for Total Dissolved Gas and Temperature has been updated; the new version, dated December 2003, will also be available via the TMT homepage very soon. One problem with this plan, said Adams: the biological monitoring section has not been updated, because this plan is intended to address physical TDG monitoring only. We will be discussing how to address this issue with the Fish Passage Center, Adams said; once that is resolved, we will post this document to the web.

**B. Grant County PUD Public Hearing.** Cliff Sears reported that there were two public hearings on the re-certification of the Priest Rapids project on January 20; these hearings were very sparsely attended. Both public commentators spoke in favor of our application, Sears said.

#### **C. Status of the Mainstem Water Quality Plan.**

**D. Status Update on the Temperature TMDL.** In response to a question, Pickett said he hasn't heard anything new on this subject since December. At this point, Oregon is backing

away to see what EPA decides to do; Washington, too, is not eager to jump in.

***E. Other.*** Harding said Oregon's Water Quality Commission recently approved a multi-year (through 2007) waiver to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for Spring Creek spill. Harding added that Mike Llewellyn has resigned as Water Quality Division administrator; Holly Schroeder will be taking Mike's place.

***5. Next WQT Meeting Date.***

The next meeting of the Water Quality Team was set for Tuesday, March 9. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.