

Dworshak Board 2024 Operational Plan for the use of the Nez Perce Tribe's 200 KAF of Stored Water in Dworshak Reservoir

1. Background

This 2024 Operational Plan for the Nez Perce Tribe's (Tribe) use of 200 thousand acre feet (KAF) of water stored in Dworshak Reservoir guides implementation of the Agreement between the United States, through the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and the Tribe for water use in Dworshak Reservoir and that Agreement's underlying Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Tribe, Corps, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service, Bonneville Power Administration and the State of Idaho (Parties)¹. The Parties have designated representatives to fulfill the purposes of the MOA, and the Board, through the consensus of its representatives, has developed this Operational Plan to describe the intended operation under the assumption that pending environmental conditions and actual operations will be consistent with an August 31 pool elevation no lower than 1,535 feet. All recitals, terms and conditions of the Agreement and the MOA are understood as describing and applying to this Operational Plan.

2. Considerations

This Operational Plan is based on consideration of the following factors.

a. Projected summer (July through September) water temperature and flow conditions for the Snake River at Lower Granite Dam.

Water temperatures for Lower Granite Dam tailrace are being managed to not exceed 68.0°F July 1 through August 31 (Figure 1). At the July 24, 2024 Technical Management Team, an Idaho Fish and Game request to reduce Dworshak flows and save as much water as possible between August 1-9 by targeting 69 degrees F during the full time frame" was coordinated (https://pweb.crohms.org/tmt/agendas/2024/0724_Minutes.pdf). This action aimed to save as much water as possible for use in later August; this operation resulted in tailrace water temperatures at or below 68 degrees F after August 13 and a projected Dworshak Reservoir elevation slightly above 1,535 feet on September 1. Between the dates of July 1 through August 25, water temperature in the Lower Granite Dam tailrace ranged from 65.8 to 69.5°F.

¹ The Agreement stems from the document titled "Mediators Term Sheet" dated April 20, 2004 and included in the Snake River Water Rights Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-447 Title X)

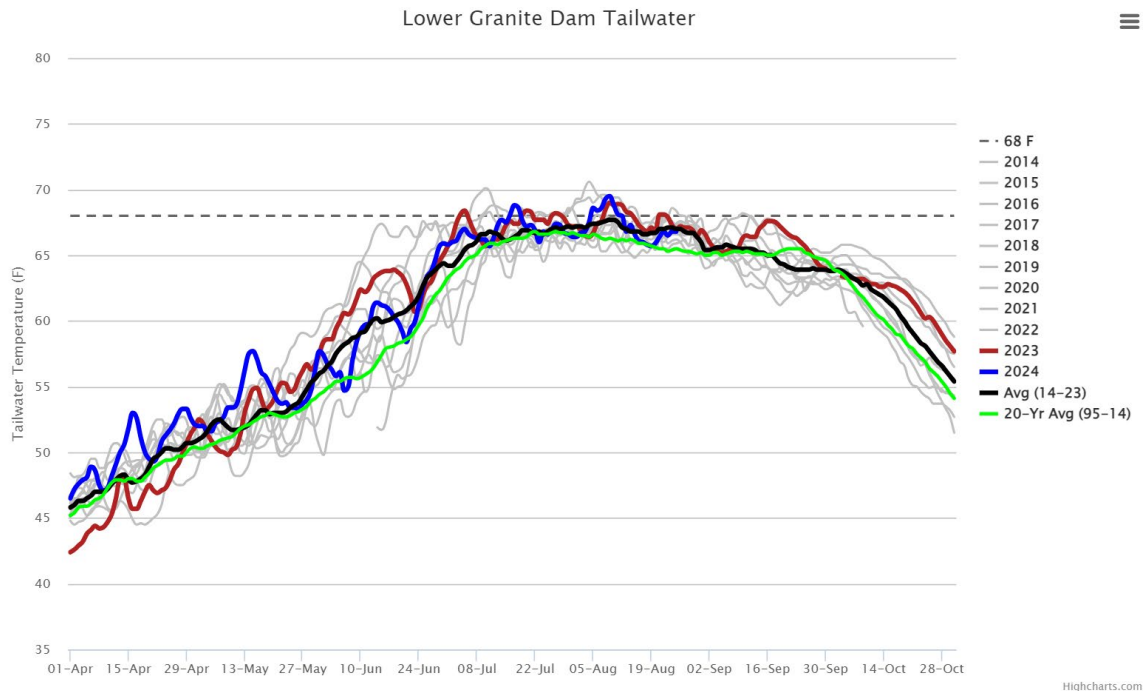


Figure 1. Daily average water temperature in the Lower Granite Dam tailrace, including 10 and 20 year averages (https://www.fpc.org/river/river_queries/Q_tailwatertempgraphv7.php).

The April through August flow conditions at Lower Granite Dam, based on the Northwest River Forecast Center’s (NWRFC) water supply forecast (https://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/water_supply/ws_forecasts.php?id=LGDW1) dated August 25, 2024 was well below average. According to the forecast, the Lower Granite Dam water supply volume forecast was 17.3 MAF, which is 82% of the average 21.1 MAF. The April through September water supply forecast from the North Fork Clearwater River (Dworshak Dam; https://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/water_supply/ws_forecasts.php?id=DWRI1) was also very low at 1,674 KAF (64% of the average 2,620 KAF average).

Dworshak Dam summer operations through August 31, are described in greater detail in the Corps, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), and Bonneville Power Administration (collectively referred to as the “Action Agencies”), January 2020, document titled, “Biological Assessment (BA) of Effects of the Operations and Maintenance of the Federal Columbia River System on ESA-Listed Species” (2020 BA) (Reference Page, 2-28). Additionally, Dworshak Dam summer operations are also discussed in the July 24, 2020, document titled, “Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7(a)(2) Biological Opinion (BiOp) and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Response Continued Operation and Maintenance of the Columbia River System” (2020 BiOp) (Reference Page, 52).

Dworshak Dam is operated in the summer for the gradual evacuation of water through a combination of temperature objectives to avoid Lower Granite Dam tailrace temperatures exceeding 68° F and reach an elevation no lower than 1,535 feet by August 31, and

elevation 1,520 feet by September 30, unless modified per the agreement between the United States and the Nez Perce Tribe for water use in the Dworshak Reservoir. Additionally, releases of cool water from Dworshak Dam reduce summer temperatures and drafting of the reservoir improves flows in the lower Snake River, improving conditions for migrating smolts, juveniles rearing in the reservoirs, and adult migrants (2020 BiOp, see pages 571, 574, and 636).

b. Juvenile fall Chinook and lamprey rearing in the Clearwater River.

Data indicate that Clearwater juvenile fall Chinook rear in the lower Clearwater River from February through September, and possibly later. These data indicate that considerable numbers of fall Chinook juveniles continue to rear in the lower Clearwater River on July 1, when Dworshak summer operations typically begin.

Data on lamprey ammocoete distribution and abundance in the mainstem Clearwater River is limited, but does confirm presence of juvenile lamprey during summer months. Ammocoete rearing occurs in sandy littoral habitat and could be impacted by abrupt flow reductions.

c. Migration status of juvenile fall Chinook in the Clearwater and Snake Rivers.

Clearwater River-origin juvenile fall Chinook, and to a lesser extent Snake River-origin juvenile fall Chinook, tend to over-winter in the lower Snake River reservoirs and migrate as yearlings the following spring. September releases from Dworshak Reservoir cool the lower Snake River and aid both actively migrating subyearlings and those that over-winter in the reservoirs.

d. Cultural resources in and around Dworshak Reservoir.

Numerous documented impacts occur to important cultural resources in and around Dworshak Reservoir as a result of summer project operations. Additionally, exposure of these sites can result in vandalism. Reserving up to 200 KAF for release during September contributes to a higher reservoir elevation during the peak recreational months of July and August.

e. Summer recreational uses of Dworshak Reservoir.

Reserving up to 200 KAF for release during September contributes to a higher reservoir elevation during the peak recreational month of July. A higher reservoir elevation in July is viewed by recreational users as desirable.

f. Thermal refuge for adult Snake River salmon and steelhead.

Adult salmon generally behave and function normally at water temperatures less than 20° C (68° F). The Snake River upstream of its confluence with the Clearwater River typically exceeds 20°C from early-July through mid-September, then declines to ~13° C

(56° F) by mid-October. As such, the Clearwater River can function as thermal refuge for salmon and steelhead as they migrate to spawning areas in the Snake River basin upstream of Lewiston, Idaho.

g. Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Water Supply.

Holding of adult spring and fall Chinook salmon broodstock, reconditioned steelhead kelts, and adult lamprey at Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery utilizes river water. Rapid changes in river water temperature and/flows can impact hatchery production (including prespawn mortality). The gradual decrease in Dworshak discharges and temperatures minimizes adverse temperature impacts on fish in the hatchery.

3. Timing of Stored Water Releases.

The operational strategy, typically beginning on or about August 31, is to have gradually decreasing outflows with incremental steps of no less than 2 days duration to achieve an elevation of 1,520 feet no later than September 30. The gradual step-down of Dworshak discharges during September is intended to gradually adjust water temperatures in the lower Clearwater River routine Doble testing constrains flow ramp down in two out of three years (Figure 3); no limited turbine availability 2024.

Additionally, a gradual ramp down of flows may decrease potential stranding of Pacific lamprey ammocoetes (larvae) that rear by burrowing into shallow habitat near the river banks. Dworshak Dam discharges outlined in this plan are based on releasing the 200 KAF of water between elevation 1535 feet and 1520 feet. During the release of the 200 KAF, upon approval of the Board, the release rates may be adjusted due to abnormal temperatures.

If the actual flows and temperatures are different than those modeled, timing of stored releases in this document may have to be revised.

Based on the above considerations, the following is the Board's 2024 operational plan (Figure 2 top graph- Alternative C).

- A. On or about August 31, Dworshak will be drafted to approximately elevation 1,535 feet and discharge is expected to be about 9.0 kcfs.
- B. Starting September 1 discharge will be approximately 8.5 kcfs, with a gradual dropping to approximately 5 kcfs on September 9, after which flows should be reduce every 2 to 5 days through September 27. Effort should be made to maintain each incremental step down in discharge for a minimum of 2 days. Discharges will be adjusted to achieve objectives C, D, E, and F below. All units will operate in undershot mode to achieve Dworshak tail water temperature near 46° F.
- C. Target Lower Granite Dam tailwater temperatures not to exceed 68° F.

D. Target Lower Granite Dam adult trap temperature not to exceed 70° F. Water for the adult trap is pulled from ~20 m depth in the Lower Granite forebay.

E. Target Clearwater River at Spalding daily average water temperatures not to exceed 56° F.

F. Target Clearwater River at Peck and Spalding daily average water temperature between day change of no more than 1° F.

4. Implementation

The Board directs that this Plan be implemented consistent with the Agreement and the MOA. The Tribe will call on the Corps pursuant to the Agreement to provide water releases as set forth in this Plan. The Tribe's representative to the Board, as the Board's chairman, will also notify other Columbia River Basin salmon managers of the year specific Plan pursuant to the MOA. Any Party may call for the Board to reconvene after the adoption of the Plan for the purpose of amending the Plan due to substantially changed conditions. The Board may only amend the Plan by the unanimous written consent of the Parties.

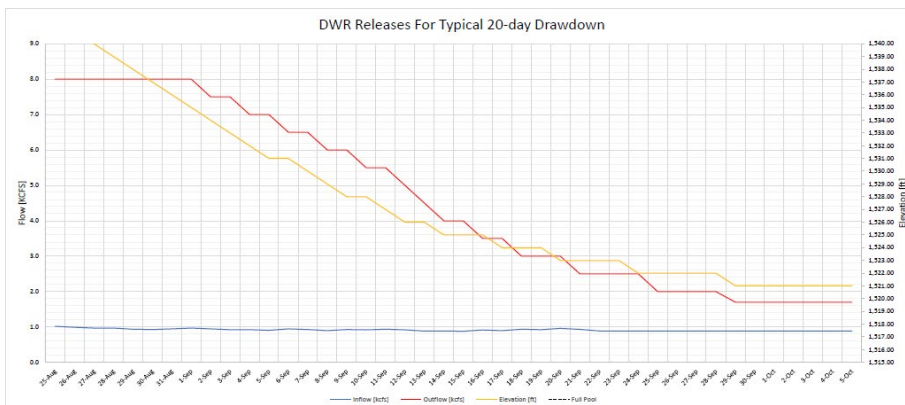
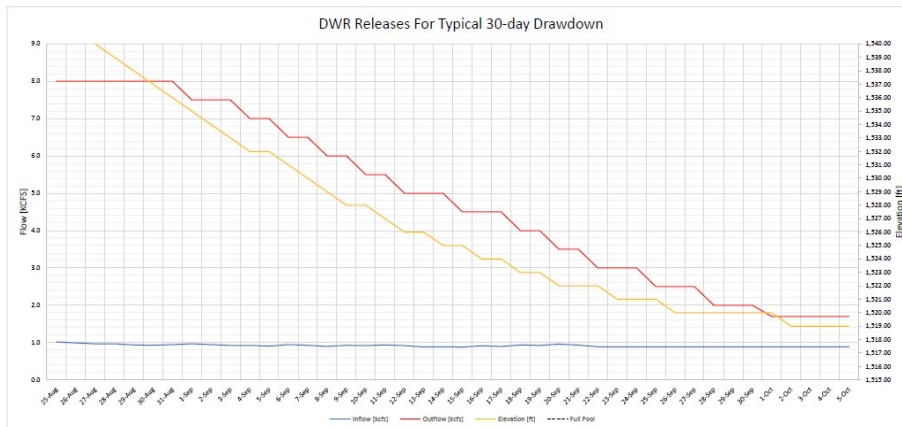
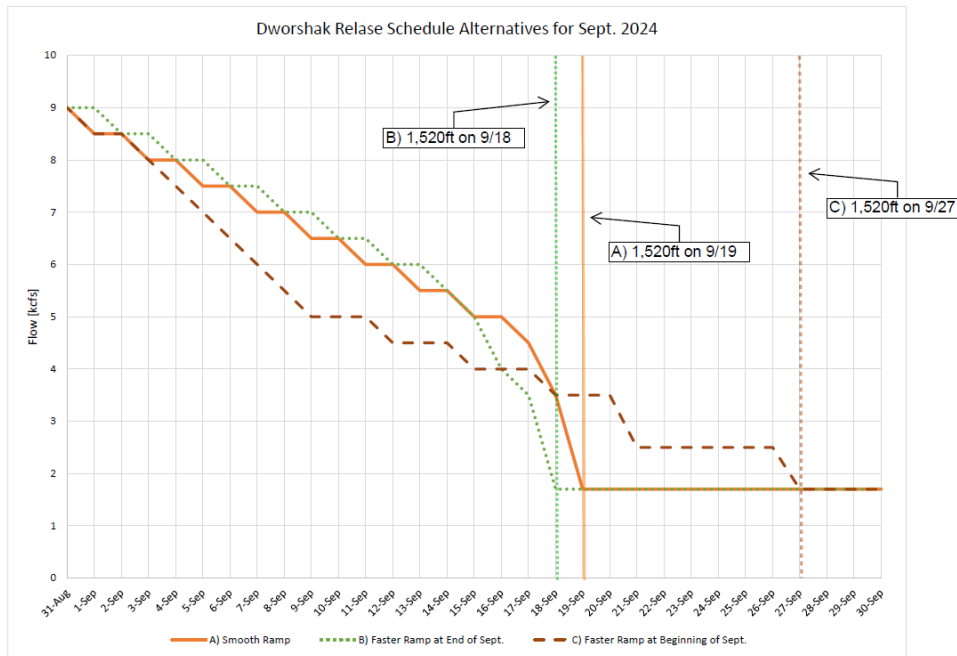


Figure 2. Dworshak Dam operational for 2024 (top graph -alternative c), typical years without Doble testing constraints (2024, middle graph), and for typical years with Doble testing constraints (2025, bottom graph).