

COLUMBIA RIVER TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

November 20, 2024

Facilitator's Summary

Facilitation Team: Emily Stranz & Colby Mills, DS Consulting

The following Facilitator's Summary is intended to capture basic discussion, decisions, and actions, as well as point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings; it is not intended to be the "record" of the meeting. Official minutes can be found on the TMT website: <https://pweb.crohms.org/tmt/agendas/2024/> Suggested edits for the summary are welcome and can be sent to Colby at colby@dsconsult.co.

Review Meeting Summaries & Minutes – TMT Members approved the official minutes and facilitator's summary from the November 6 meeting.

Chum Operation – Doug Baus, Corps, provided an overview of the current conditions and forecasts at Bonneville Dam (BON) for chum operations, noting that discussions will shift from spawning to chum incubation operations next month. Details on the current chum operation are posted to the TMT website.

On November 20 at 0800 hours, total outflow was 124 kcfs with a tailwater elevation of 12.2 feet. Yesterday's total outflow averaged 126.6 kcfs with an average tailwater elevation of 12.35 feet. The RFC inflow forecast over the next 10-days shows a high of 136 kcfs on November 24 and a low of 111 kcfs on November 26.

Tony Norris, BPA, added that BPA is operating within the coordinated chum operation; outlooks for streamflow and water supply conditions are looking good.

Kelsey Swieca, NOAA, reported upwards of 1,000 chum over BON this year so far, the highest seen over the project since 1960. Recent spawning surveys in the Ives/Pierce region counted 161 live chum. This number is expected to increase substantially over the next couple weeks.

Chris Runyan, Reclamation, added that water supply so far is looking good for chum; the STP is currently showing Grand Coulee (GCL) staying fairly high into early January.

Preliminary Survival Estimates Memo – Kelsey provided an update on NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center's (NWFSC) annual survival Memo, for spring-migrating juvenile salmonid passage through the Snake and Columbia River dams and reservoirs. The preliminary survival estimates can be viewed on the TMT website. Kelsey emphasized that these data are preliminary and are subject to change. The final survival report will be issued in the spring of 2025. Further discussion on passage survival will occur in the future, potentially at TMT but more likely via other forums.

Tom Lorz, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, raised concerns about the methodologies used in NWFSC survival estimates, particularly regarding reports showing over 100% survival rates for certain reaches. Kelsey noted that there have been updates to methodologies, including the use of PIT tags found in avian populations, and encouraged further conversation regarding these concerns with NWFSC at the Anadromous Fish Evaluation Program (AFEP) meeting on December 3.

Snake River Zero Generation – Tony reported that NOAA has provided the Water Management Plan's (WMP) trigger information for the start of the zero generation operation. Kelsey reminded the TMT that the trigger for zero flow/zero generation includes both date and abundance criteria; specific details are included on pages 39-40 of the WMP (posted to the TMT website). The date criteria are December 1, 2024, through February 28, 2025, with the "few, if any" abundance criteria set using a sliding scale of

total and unclipped adult steelhead counts at Lower Granite (LWG) since July 1, 2024. Kelsey clarified that once the criteria are met (adult counts on a 3-day rolling average passing LWG) on or after December 1, there is an option to implement zero generation/flow operations. 100,380 total and 28,359 unclipped steelhead have passed so far, which equates to abundance criteria of less than 50 total steelhead and less than 10 unclipped steelhead. In response to a question, she clarified that the unclipped criteria will be adjusted if the cumulative count since July 1 increases above 30,000, which would increase the “few, if any” trigger to 20 unclipped steelhead.

Kelsey will send an email notification to the TMT when the trigger is met, keeping the process consistent with last year. Jay Hesse, Nez Perce Tribe, reminded the TMT that while the criteria are in place, the Tribe’s position remains that zero flow conditions are not desirable, and they request use of the operations to be as minimized as possible.

TMT Business – The DSC Process Meeting following today’s business meeting was cancelled due to a lack of agenda items. The December 4 TMT meeting will remain on the calendar, with the potential for cancellation if there is a lack of agenda items; Doug will notify the TMT.

Questions or Comments from Non-TMT Members – there were no questions or comments from non-TMT Members.

The next scheduled TMT meeting is on December 4, 2024, at 9:00 AM.

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team
DRAFT OFFICIAL MINUTES
Wednesday, November 20, 2024**

Minutes: Andrea Ausmus, BPA (contractor, CorSource Technology Group)

Today's TMT meeting was held via conference call and webinar, chaired by Doug Baus, Corps, and facilitated by Emily Stranz, DS Consulting. A list of today's attendees is available at the end of these minutes.

1. Review Summary and Minutes

a. October 6 Summary and Minutes

- Approved.

2. Chum Operations - Tony Norris, BPA; Chris Runyan, BOR; Kelsey Swieca, NOAA; Charles Morrill, WA; Doug Baus, Corps-NWD

- Start Date: November 1
- Next Month TMT will address transition to Incubation Operation; please be available for discussion.

a. Bonneville Dam (BON) – Hourly Data – *Baus*

- Total Outflow (Hour 8): 124 kcfs
- Tailwater Elevation: 12.2 feet
- Average Outflow (Nov 19): 126.6 kcfs
- Average Tailwater Elevation (Nov 19): 12.35 feet

b. NWRFC – BON Inflow Forecast - *Baus*

- BON Inflow Forecasted:
 - High: 136 kcfs (November 24)
 - Low: 111 kcfs (November 26)

c. BPA Update – *Norris*

- BPA has been operating BON per the coordinated operation.
- All signs look good from a stream flow and water supply condition.

d. NOAA Chum Update – *Swieca*

- BON Counts

- Adult Chum Count: 1034 Chum YTD
- Highest number of chum over BON since 1960.
- Spawning Surveys (Ives Pierce region)
 - Recent survey count: 161 Live Chum
 - Swieca said that she expects this number to increase over the next couple of weeks. She suspects substantially but we will have to wait and see how it all plays out.

e. Reclamation Update – *Runyan*

- Water supply is looking alright for Chum.
- The STP is showing that GCL will stay fairly high into first part of January.
 - Currently above average elevations.
 - FRM elevations will be provided around January.

Morrill said later in the meeting that he was trying to pull up November 19 Survey Data on their database, but he was having technical difficulties. He said that he was confident that the survey team was out yesterday, and data will be available later in the week. He said that if he can get into the database, he can provide a memo to TMT to recap yesterday's observations in the Ives/Pierce area.

f. TMT Coordinated Chum Operation

1. Effective Friday, November 1, at 0600 hours, and until further notice, operate the Bonneville Dam tailwater in the following order of operating ranges as project outflow increases.
2. During all hours, operate project outflow to provide a tailwater elevation in the range of 11.3 - 13.0 feet.
3. Then, if necessary to increase project outflow, the tailwater may be operated up to 16.5 feet during nighttime hours (1700-0600). Concentrate highest elevations around 2400 hours.
4. Then, if necessary to increase project outflow, the tailwater may be operated up to 18.5 feet during nighttime hours (1700-0600).
5. Then, if increasing river flow precludes the ability to manage the tailwater within the steps above, operate to provide a tailwater in the range of 13.0-16.5 feet during daytime hours (0600-1700) and up to the maximum within project 24-hour ramp rate limits during nighttime hours (1700-0600).

3. Preliminary Survival Estimates Memo – *Swieca*

a. Memo

- NOAA's Northwest Fishery Science Center (NWFSC) produces a survival memo every year.
 - NOAA distributes a report, based on preliminary data, in the Fall.

- These data are preliminary and subject to change.
- NOAA will distribute the final report sometime in the spring.
- Historically NMFS members have distributed the reports to TMT.
 - TMT should review in their own time and there will be more discussion about the report in the future.
- [Link](#) is on agenda

Tom Lorz, Umatilla/CRITFC, told Swieca thank you for the update. He asked Swieca if she knew if NWFSC is going to start looking at some other methodologies as well because the fact that he is still seeing over 100% survival rates in certain reaches basically points to NWFSC not modernizing or doing anything else to correct for that. Lorz said that CRITFC had talked to NWFSC numerous times about different methodologies. NWFSC did Appendix D basing analysis back in 2021. Lorz asked if NWFSC is moving anywhere on that or if we are always going to have the archaic system, where we are getting over 100% survivals and we are going to live with it.

Swieca said that she was not sure that they should be referred to as archaic. She said that she does think that this is a conversation that they could continue to have with NWFSC. She said that she encouraged Lorz to continue to bring those concerns. She said that she would note that there have been some updates to the methodology including the incorporation of avian tags to increase the confidence in the survival estimates. She said that she would not be diving into that during the current meeting but if those conversations need to happen, she would be happy to participate in them.

Lorz said that it sounded good, he was trying to figure it out because TMT is not doing the TMT End of Year Review, and it is the normal place to talk about this kind of stuff. He asked if AFEP (Anadromous Fish Evaluation Program) review might be the other location.

Swieca said that she wanted to reiterate that what she meant was that we were not going to talk about it today, that does not mean we would never do it. She said that this could and would be covered by Steve Smith's presentation at AFEP.

Stranz said that AFEP will be a good opportunity to chat with Smith about that, and if that does not answer the questions TMT can follow up and pull together something else to make sure there is the opportunity to have that conversation.

Lorz said that this is not a new conversation. He said that they have been having this conversation for a decadal timeframe. He said that he is not exactly expecting major changes. He said that this does not seem to be a priority for the NWFSC. It is what it is. He said that they had talked about this a lot, there are some other techniques and methods out there. NWFSC keeps talking about looking at them and then we keep getting reports with interesting things. To still be reporting 100% survivals in certain reaches when we have methodologies and techniques out there, so we do not do that and get better information. It would be delightful, but it is what it is.

Stranz said that this seems like an important conversation to have, at least to check in with NWFSC on what their thinking is and why they are using the methodologies that they are. She said that she did not want to go too far into that right now because we do

not have the right representation in the meeting to share information and thinking. If it is important to continue talking about Stranz said to make sure to either take it to the AFEP meeting.

AFEP meeting:

December 3, 2024

4. Zero Gen – Norris/Swieca

a. Memo

- Time of year for trigger information for the Water Management Plan (WMP) regarding the start of Zero Gen Operation.
 - Swieca reported those numbers to the Corps.
- Trigger for Zero Flow/Generation includes both at date and an adult steelhead abundance criteria.
 - Dates for zero gen: December 1 – February 28
 - Adult steelhead abundance at LWG:
 - Sliding scale of both Total and Unclipped Steelhead Abundance at LWG since July 1.
 - Outlined in the [WMP](#) – Table 12 (page 39 & 40)
 - July 1 Steelhead
 - Total: 100,380 Steelhead
 - Unclipped: 28,359 Steelhead
 - Criteria (3-day rolling average count at LWG on or after December 1):
 - Total steelhead: less than 50
 - Unclipped steelhead: less than 10
- Swieca will send an email to TMT when trigger is met (or in the way that is consistent with methods in the past).

Jay Hesse, Nez Perce, asked Swieca about the unclipped number. He said that it was his understanding that the cumulative run-to-date would continue to be updated until December 1. If it were to cross the 30,000 unclipped steelhead threshold, that count criteria would be adjusted to “less than 20” unclipped steelhead. He asked Swieca for confirmation. He said that we are relatively close to that number.

Swieca said that it was her understanding and read on the criteria as well. She said that it is up until the last day of November. With that said we would need about 2,000 more unclipped steelhead in the next ~10 days. She said that it is possible so she will certainly keep an eye on it and if there is a change, if we do exceed 30,000 unclipped steelhead, she will send an email notification indicating that change if it does not align well with another TMT meeting.

Hesse added an annual reminder to TMT. While the criteria are in place it is still the position of the Nez Perce Tribe that Zero Flow conditions are not desirable. It is the Nez Perce’s request that those operations be minimized to the greatest extent possible.

5. Set agenda for next meeting – December 4, 2024

a. Chum Operations

If the meeting is just providing typical updates TMT will be cancelling meeting. If something out of the ordinary happens then TMT will update. Baus will notify TMT if the meeting is cancelled by COB Dec 3.

Today’s Attendees:

Agency	TMT Representative(s)
NOAA Fisheries	Kelsey Swieca (NMFS, FPAC Chair)
Oregon	Erick Van Dyke
Washington	Charles Morrill
Kootenai Tribe	
Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation	Dennis Moore
Umatilla Tribe	Tom Lorz (CRITFC), Pete McHugh (CRITFC)
Yakama Nation	Tom Iverson
Bureau of Reclamation	Chris Runyan
Army Corps of Engineers	Doug Baus (Chair), Lisa Wright
US Fish & Wildlife Service	Dave Swank
Idaho	Jonathan Ebel
Montana	Brian Marotz
Spokane Tribe	
Nez Perce Tribe	Jay Hesse
Warm Springs Tribe	
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	
Bonneville Power Administration	Tony Norris

Other Attendees (non-TMT members):

COE – Jessika Solleder, Elizabeth Holdren, Chris Peery, Tiffany Stoeckig-Dixon

DS Consulting – Emily Stranz (Facilitator), Colby Mills

CorSource – Andrea Ausmus (BPA note taker, Contractor)

Clearing Up – K.C. Mehaffey

Douglas Co. PUD – Andrew Gingerich

Columbia Basin Bulletin – Mike O’Bryant