

COLUMBIA RIVER TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

December 18, 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 meeting minutes and facilitator's summary from December 4 with no additional edits.

Chum Operation – Doug Baus, Corps, provided an overview of the current conditions and forecasts for chum operations at Bonneville Dam (BON), noting that the chum spawning phase will be transitioning to the chum incubation phase. A draft of the current chum incubation operation is posted to the TMT website.

BON at 0700 hours had a project tailwater elevation of 12.8 feet with a total outflow of 113 kcfs. The NWRFC inflow forecast over the next 10-day period shows a low of 130 kcfs on December 22 and a high of 156 kcfs on December 27.

Tony Norris, BPA, reported that significant rainfall has affected streamflow upstream of BON and BPA expects continued precipitation over the next 10-days; the Willamette River is expected to peak around 85 kcfs. He noted the need for reverse load factoring at BON last night to maintain the daytime tailwater operating range. If the chum spawning operation were to continue into next week, it would likely result in spill at night to maintain the daytime tailwater operation. Kelsey Swieca, NOAA, asked for clarification regarding the expected timeframe for reverse load factoring. Tony noted that due to the heavy precipitation it will likely need to continue for at least a week and a half (at a minimum) due to the high tailwater levels up to 16 feet and the BON powerhouse reaching close to capacity at night.

Kelsey reported that not many chum have been observed over BON the last couple of weeks, although the yearly total is projected to be 1,135, the highest since 1954. Recent spawning surveys from WDFW indicate a decline in live chum observed, with 54 live chum counted on December 9.

Charles Morrill, WA, reported on chum conditions in the Ives/Pierce area, noting there were a few chum still present although no fresh live chum were observed. WDFW is comfortable confirming the end of the chum spawning period by Friday, December 20 (or earlier depending on the survey results) and moving into the incubation phase of the operation. Charles added that a survey was conducted in the Hamilton area yesterday; no live fish were observed, 10 redds were observed in Hamilton Creek. He confirmed that many survey locations have not been surveyed since late November due to weather conditions.

Transition to Chum Incubation Phase

Doug reminded the group that a draft operation for the chum incubation phase is listed on the TMT website, with FPAC's preliminary recommendation to transition to a minimum 11.3-foot tailwater elevation (operating at 11.5-foot with the buffer) at BON starting on December 20. Charles indicated that additional conversations will be held internally at WDFW, and he will confirm the transition with Kelsey by Friday morning. Kelsey will notify the AAs via email to confirm timing for the shift to incubation operations. It was noted that the transition could potentially occur sooner, on December 19, pending the confirmation from WDFW. Tony will present updated redds location measurements, based on Pacific

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States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSFMC) monitoring crew data from November and December, at the next TMT meeting; Charles confirmed that PSFMC and WDFW are the same monitoring crew.

Questions or Comments from Non-TMT Members – Charles Pace asked about data collection in the lower reaches of Hamilton Creek, and if it has been discontinued. Tony clarified that data collected for Hamilton Creek and Springs is not posted publicly (only internal to WDFW). It was confirmed that data collection and monitoring in the Hamilton Creek area includes the use of boats and on foot instead of snorkeling.

The next scheduled TMT meeting is on January 8, 2025, at 9:00 AM.

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team
OFFICIAL MINUTES
Wednesday, December 18, 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. December 4 Summary and Minutes

- Approved.

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

- TMT coordinated the start of the Incubation Period at the December 18 meeting.
- Chum Spawning Operation Start Date: November 1
- Recommended Chum Incubation Start Date: December 20

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

- Tailwater Elevation (Hour 7): 12.8 feet
- Total Outflow: 113 kcfs

b. NWRFC – BON Inflow Forecast - *Baus*

- BON Inflow Forecasted:
 - High: 156 kcfs (December 27)
 - Low: 130 kcfs (December 22)

c. BPA Update – *Norris*

- It has been raining and that has produced a significant stream flow response.
 - Stream flows above BON and the Willamette River are all responding.
 - Last night, December 17, there was some significant reverse load factoring to be able to maintain the daytime minimum tailwater operating range.
- There is additional precipitation in the forecast coming in the next ten day.
 - Willamette is expected to peak: ~85 kcfs

- Given the uncertainty of precipitation, it would mean that if the Chum Daytime Tailwater Operation were to continue next week it would likely result in spill at night to be able to maintain criteria.

Swieca said that there were a couple of questions at FPAC about the timeframe that BPA would expect the reverse load factoring to occur. She said that their understanding is that it will just be as the system moves through over the next couple days or so. She asked Norris if that was accurate.

Norris said that we are probably not seeing an end to the system over the next week and half, at a minimum. We started in earnest last night with up to 16-foot tailwater and we are bumping up against BON powerhouse capacity at night. If it continues as the Willamette comes up, to be able to maintain a 16 (and we might not be able to maintain a 16 at night and the daytime if the daytime operating range was continued to be in place) that would most likely require spill at night to be able to maintain the daytime operating range. It has already started to answer Swieca’s question.

Swieca said she knew that it already had started, but FPAC was having some conversation about how long we expected it to continue. She said that it sounds like a week or so at this rate.

Norris said at a minimum, because out precipitation forecasts are always volatile this time of year.

d. NOAA Chum Update – *Swieca*

- Not many chum over BON the last couple of weeks.
- YTD BON Count: 1135 Chum
 - High for the number of chum passing BON, highest since 1954.

e. WDFW Ives/Pierce Region Spawning Surveys – *Swieca*

- “No Count” on December 6 due to weather.
- December 9 Survey:
 - Live Count: 54 Chum
 - Starting to die down by December 9.
 - Redd Count: 17 Redds

f. Washington’s Chum Update – *Morrill*

- Morrill was able to talk to Ricky.
 - Ricky’s assessment is that at this point in time, there were a few live chum hanging on and there are no fresh lives chum in the Ives area.
 - Conditions were not very good.
- Washington is comfortable that we are at the end of the chum spawning period.

- Once Morrill still needs to confirm with a couple people (Brad).
- Washington suggests ending the Spawning Operation no later than Friday, possibly Thursday and moving ahead to the incubation phase.
- Morrill added that aside from the Ives Pierce area, the survey crews did get a survey done in Hamilton yesterday, no live fish, no dead fish observed. They did see 10 redds in Hamilton Creek.

Erick Van Dyke said that we were looking at the spawning ground survey information earlier. He said that he noticed that many sites have not been surveyed since sometime in late-November. He asked if that issue is related to conditions.

Morrill said conditions, water conditions and visibility.

g. Suggested TMT Coordinated Chum Operation: Incubation – *December 18, 2024*

- Swieca shared that FPAC had some discussion yesterday while caucusing before TMT and they arrived at an ability to provide a preliminary recommendation for a transition to the Incubation Phase.
 - Preliminary Start Date: Friday, December 20, 2024
 - Minimum Tailwater Elevation: 11.3 feet
 - As indicated on the draft version of the Chum Incubation operation posted to today's agenda.
 - WDFW is hoping to have a couple additional conversations and would like to confirm that the survey crews are comfortable with the transition. At this time the above should be considered preliminary.
 - FPAC should be able to provide the final recommendation no later than Friday, December 20. Recommendations will be confirmed or adjusted via email.
- Norris said that he got information from BPA's surveys this morning.
 - They went out last week with the Pacific States monitoring crew and measured chum redd location elevations and the adjacent water surface.
 - All but one or two redds, in most locations, are well submerged, even below some of the March 23 lower water surface.
 - Next TMT Norris will be able to present data.
 - 11.3 feet will be more than enough to support the redds through emergence.

Morrill added that the 11.3' means they operate to an 11.5', with a buffer of an additional two-tenths of a foot of elevation.

Erick Van Dyke, ODFW, asked for clarification about the redds that were actually measured. He asked if they were the official redds that were identified in surveys leading up to the late-November period. He said that the issue stands for him, that if you are just measuring redds that were officially written down during the survey then it will miss those redds that may have been and probably were created in December. He said that he wanted to make sure that was said out loud, so TMT are aware of it.

Norris said to clarify that process, they follow the Pacific States crew around and they identify the places that chum have spawned throughout the season. He said that they are not measuring redds that just occurred that day but based on the crews field knowledge from going out once or twice a week they show BPA where the redds were located and BPA measures those locations. It is directed by the monitoring crews.

Stranz restated for confirmation that it includes redds from throughout the season, not just from November surveys.

Norris said November and December, the crews show BPA where the chum have been spawning throughout that period.

Van Dyke said that Norris is referring to the PSMFC crew. Van Dyke wanted to make sure that he understood that that is the same crew that WDFW sends out.

Morrill said that is correct, they happen to be employees of WDFW, however out of the current MOU, they are still paid by PSMFC. Preliminary Recommendation

- Preliminary (potentially December 19 if communicated by Morrill)
 1. Effective Friday, December 20, at 0001 hours, and until further notice, the Bonneville Dam minimum tailwater elevation is 11.3 feet during all hours.
 - Will be firmed up by Swieca via email communication with the Action Agencies.

3. Questions from the Public

Charles Pace asked about data collection in the lower reaches of Hamilton Creek. He asked if it has been discontinued.

Morrill said that he was looking at the survey data this morning and they said that they were out yesterday (December 17) on Hamilton Creek.

Stranz asked if Morrill is speaking to the chum spawning ground surveys.

Morrill said that was correct.

Stranz said that there is a link for the chum spawning ground surveys on the TMT agenda. She asked if Pace was thinking of any other data or if that was what he was thinking.

Pace said that it looked to him like it was Pierce Island's complex and back of there rather than Hamilton Creek, up the creek, but he may have overlooked something.

Norris said that Pace was correct. He said that WDFW does not post the data, the data that is collected for Hamilton Creek and Hamilton Springs is posted via a different method that Morrill has to access with a special database, this is not usually included. The Ives Complex information is posted because the operation at BON directly affects that spawning habitat. But it is disconnected from the operation for Hamilton Creek and Hamilton Springs.

Pace asked if WDFW, or does anyone, collect snorkeling data at Hamilton Creek.

Norris said that he does not know if anyone snorkeling it, but they have gone through when the water is high enough and floated it with boats. He said that he had watched them do that this season at least once.

Morrill said that snorkeling is not a technique that is used for redd counting or chum counting. If the water is high, they can take advantage of the boat but normally they survey the mouth and the upper limit of access by foot.

Norris said that it is probably not safe to snorkel that stream regardless.

Morrill confirmed that it is not a technique that WDFW incorporates for redd surveys, both in the Columbia and throughout the State where they do spawning redd surveys.

Stranz followed up on Pace's question. She asked if the Hamilton data that Morrill sees is posted publicly anywhere for the public to access.

Morrill said that it is on an internal stream survey database, which is internal to WDFW. When he spoke to what was reported yesterday, he was looking at that internal database.

Stranz confirmed that it is internal and not public facing.

Morrill said that was correct.

4. Set agenda for next meeting – January 8, 2025

Today’s Attendees:

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

Other Attendees (non-TMT members):

COE – Tiffany Stoeckig-Dixon, Dan Turner, Tom Conning, Catherine Dudgeon, Eric Chow, Elizabeth Holdren, Alexis Mills

BPA – Tammy Mackey, Carolina Andes

DS Consulting – Emily Stranz (Facilitator), Colby Mills

CorSource – Andrea Ausmus (BPA note taker, Contractor)

Washington Ecology – Thomas Starkey

EKI – Eve James

Clearing Up – K.C. Mehaffey

Snohomish PUD – Scott Richards, Mike Shapley

Chelan PUD – Lance Beyer, Jay Fintz, Brandon Carnahan

Columbia Basin Bulletin – Mike O’Bryant

FPC – Erin Cooper

NPCC – Kate Self

Public - Charles Pace