
DRAFT 2026 WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

****Submit requested revisions in track changes to this .docx file and email to crunyan@usbr.gov, ranorris@bpa.gov, and douglas.m.baus@usace.army.mil, by August 22. It is difficult to assume specific requested changes that may come in the form of subjective comments (for example, add more, take some out, rework this paragraph, etc.), supplemental memos and/or an overview narrative in a separate email, so please provide specific requested narrative changes in track changes to this document.*



Bonneville Dam
Juvenile Monitoring Facility
June 3, 2011

Bonneville Power Administration
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Governing Documents	1
2.1 Biological Assessments (BA)	2
2.2 BiOps	2
2.3 Additional Governing Documents	3
2.4 Other Key Documents	4
3. WMP Implementation Process	5
3.1 Technical Management Team (TMT)	5
3.2 Preparation of the WMP	5
3.3 Fish Passage Plan (FPP)	6
3.4 Non-ESA-Listed Fish and Wildlife Conservation Operations	6
4. Columbia River System Operations	7
4.1 Priorities	7
4.2 Conflicts	9
4.3 Emergencies	11
4.4 Fish Research	12
4.5 FRM Shifts	12
5. Decision Points and Water Supply Forecasts	12
5.1 Water Management Decisions and Actions	12
5.2 Water Supply Forecasts (WSF)	1514
6. Project Operations	1716
6.1 Hugh Keenleyside Dam (Arrow Canadian Project)	2019
6.2 Hungry Horse Dam	2120
6.3 Albeni Falls Dam	2524
6.4 Libby Dam	2625
6.5 Grand Coulee Dam	3234
6.6 Chief Joseph Dam	3635
6.7 Middle Columbia Projects	3635
6.8 Dworshak Dam	3736
6.9 Brownlee Dam	4140
6.10 Lower Snake River Dams (Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, Ice Harbor)	4140
6.11 Lower Columbia River Dams (McNary, John Day, The Dalles, Bonneville)	4342
7. Specific Operations	4544
7.1 Canadian Storage for Flow Augmentation	4544
7.2 Upper Snake River Reservoir Operation for Flow Augmentation	4645
7.3 Bonneville Chum Operations	4746
7.4 Description of Variable Draft Limits	5150
7.5 Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project of the Washington State Department of Ecology, Columbia River Water Management Program	5352
7.6 Public Coordination	5352
8. Water Quality	5453
9. Dry Water Year Operations	5453

1. Introduction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), collectively referred to as the Action Agencies (AAs), have consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), collectively referred to as the Services, on the effects of operating the 14 Federal multi-purpose projects in the Columbia River System (CRS) on species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and resulted in biological opinions (2020 CRS BiOps) from the Services. ~~that concluded that Planned~~ operations and maintenance of the CRS ~~areas described proposed~~ by the AAs in the Biological Assessment of Effects of the Operations and Maintenance of the Federal Columbia River System (January 2020) (2020 CRS BA) and the Clarification and Additional Information to the Biological Assessment of Effects of the Operations and Maintenance of the Columbia River System on ESA-listed Species transmitted to the Services on January 23, 2020 (April 1, 2020) (2020 BA Clarification Letter), as well as actions in the Incidental Take Statements in the 2020 CRS BiOps ~~are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence or adversely modify designated critical habitat of ESA-listed species~~. The AAs are currently operating the CRS in accordance with the 2020 CRS BiOps from the Services as well as other governing documents that are described below in greater detail in Section 2.

The 2026 Water Management Plan (WMP) describes the AAs' plan for the 2026 water year (October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026) for ~~implementing the specific storage project and reservoir operations as detailed in the Proposed Action in the AAs' 2020 CRS BA and 2020 BA Clarification Letter and analyzed in the 2020 CRS BiOps~~. ~~The AAs selected the Preferred Alternative from the 2020 Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement (CRSO EIS), which was the basis of the Proposed Action in the 2020 CRS BA, as the Selected Alternative for implementation in the Record of Decision (ROD), dated September 28, 2020. The ROD also incorporated the requirements outlined in the Incidental Take Statements contained in the 2020 CRS BiOps.~~

The AAs are the final authorities on the content of the WMP after coordination with the sovereign inter-agency Technical Management Team (TMT) to solicit their review, comment, and recommendations for consideration during preparation of the WMP. The WMP is consistent with the adaptive management provisions considered in the CRSO EIS and ROD, and the 2020 CRS BiOps. System operations contained in the WMP may be adjusted in-season in coordination with the TMT. The AAs prepare seasonal updates to the 2026 WMP in coordination with the TMT and will post updates on the following website:
<http://pweb.crohms.org/tmt/documents/wmp/>

2. Governing Documents

Information regarding operations described in the WMP may be found in the following governing documents.

Commented [JH1]: The WMP draft does not describe what document(s)/process will be used to set operations in the pending (Feb-March of 2026) FOP. The RIOG review process of the FOP has been very constrained in time and USG responsiveness. Any changes to fish operations need to be coordinated in a meaningful way and be responsive to the dire status of fish populations (i.e. better for fish survival and supportive in achieving healthy and abundant Fish and Wildlife Program goals).

2.1 Biological Assessments (BA)

2007 BA on the Upper Snake (Reclamation)

Reclamation submitted a BA to NMFS in August 2007 that described actions involving operations and routine maintenance at 12 Federal projects located upstream of Brownlee Reservoir and evaluated the effects of those actions on ESA-listed fish species. The BA is available on the following website:

<https://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/esa/uppersnake/index.html>

2013 BA on the Odessa Subarea Partial Groundwater Replacement Project (Reclamation)

Reclamation submitted a BA to NMFS in October 2013 that described the actions involving partial groundwater replacement for the Odessa Subarea of the Columbia Basin Project, titled, “Biological Assessment of Effects to Species and Critical Habitat for Thirteen Anadromous Salmon ESUs, Pacific Eulachon, Green Sturgeon, and Killer Whales in the Columbia River Basin from Implementation of the Modified Partial Groundwater Irrigation Replacement Alternative (Alternative 4A)”. The BA is available on the following website:

<https://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/esa/wash/odessa/ba-odessa.pdf>

2020 CRS BA (BPA, Reclamation, and Corps)

The Corps, on behalf of the AAs, submitted a BA to the Services on January 23, 2020, titled, “Biological Assessment of Effects of the Operations and Maintenance of the Federal Columbia River System on ESA-Listed Species” (2020 CRS BA). The 2020 CRS BA described the operation and maintenance of the 14 Federal multiple use dam and reservoir projects in the CRS for formal consultation under Section 7 of the ESA and Essential Fish Habitat consultation under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The 2020 CRS BA described the operations and maintenance of the 14 CRS dams and associated effects of those actions on ESA-listed species. The 2020 CRS BA citation throughout this WMP incorporates by reference the April 1, 2020, letter from the Corps to the Services titled, “Clarification and Additional Information to the Biological Assessment of Effects of the Operations and Maintenance of the Columbia River System on ESA-listed Species Transmitted to the Services on January 23, 2020” (2020 BA Clarification Letter). The BA may be found in Appendix V, Part 1, on the following website:

<https://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/CRSO/Final-EIS/#top>

2.2 BiOps

2008 NMFS Upper Snake BiOp

The 2008 NMFS Upper Snake BiOp titled, “Consultation for the Operation and Maintenance of 10 U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Projects and 2 Related Actions in the Upper Snake River above Brownlee Reservoir (Revised and Reissued Pursuant to court order, *American Rivers v. NOAA Fisheries*, CV 04-0061-RE (D. Or. Feb. 27, 2006)),” and dated May 5, 2008. The document may be found on the following website:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fish_passage/fcrps_opinion/federal_columbia_river_power_system.html

2013 NMFS Odessa Subarea Partial Groundwater Replacement Project BiOp

The 2013 NMFS Odessa Subarea Modified Partial Groundwater Replacement Project BiOp titled, “Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(2) Biological Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Odessa Subarea Modified Partial Groundwater Replacement Project. (NWR-2012-9371)” and dated January 11, 2013. The document may be found on the following website:

<https://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/esa/wash/odessa/biopodessa.pdf>

2020 USFWS BiOp

The 2020 USFWS BiOp titled, “Endangered Species Act - Section 7 Consultation Biological Opinion U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Reference: 01EWF00-2017-F-1650, Columbia River System Operations and Maintenance of 14 Federal Dams and Reservoirs,” dated July 24, 2020, replaced the 2000 and 2006 USFWS BiOps. The 2020 USFWS BiOp analyzed the effects of the Proposed Action as described in the AAs’ 2020 CRS BA. The 2020 USFWS BiOp and related documents may be found on the following website:

<https://ecos.fws.gov/tails/pub/document/17101031>

2020 NMFS BiOp

The 2020 NMFS BiOp titled, “Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7(a)(2) Biological Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Response, Continued Operation and Maintenance of the Columbia River System,” dated July 24, 2020, replaced the 2019 NMFS BiOp. The 2020 NMFS BiOp analyzed the effects of the Proposed Action as described in the AAs’ 2020 CRS BA. The 2020 NMFS BiOp and related documents may be found on the following website:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/biological-opinion-operation-and-maintenance-fourteen-multiple-use-dam-and>

2.3 Additional Governing Documents

1987 Snake River Basin Adjudication (SRBA)

The 1987 SRBA was an administrative and legal process that began in 1987 to determine the water rights in the Snake River Basin drainage. The Final Unified Decree for the SRBA was

signed on August 25, 2014. Documentation associated with the SRBA may found on the following website:

<https://idwr.idaho.gov/water-rights/adjudication/srba/>

Columbia River Treaty Operating Plans

The Columbia River Treaty (Treaty) between Canada and the United States of America provides that operating plans are prepared for the Canadian storage in the Upper Columbia River Basin. These plans are used for the operation of Mica, Duncan, and Arrow Reservoirs to provide the required resultant Treaty flows at the Canada-United States border. Operating plans may be found at the following website:

<https://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/CRWM/PEB/CRT-Documents/>

The Treaty “Arrow 3.6 Million Acre-Feet Flood Risk Operating Plan,” dated June 26, 2025, may be found at the following website:

<https://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/crwm/forecasts/>

2.4 Other Key Documents

Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

The Final CRSO EIS dated July 2020 addresses the ongoing operations, maintenance, and configuration of the 14 Federal Columbia River System (CRS) projects on the Columbia and Snake rivers. As part of the CRSO EIS, the agencies considered six alternatives to Columbia River System operations, maintenance, and configuration. The agencies analyzed the effects of these alternatives on the human environment, including environmental, economic, and social impacts. On February 28, 2020, the co-lead agencies released for public comment the Draft CRSO EIS describing the effects of these alternatives and identifying the agencies’ Preferred Alternative. The co-lead agencies released the Final EIS on July 28, 2020, and the agencies issued the joint Record of Decision on September 28, 2020. The co-lead agencies identified the Preferred Alternative, as described in detail in Chapter 7 of the Final EIS, as the Selected Alternative in the Record of Decision (ROD). The Draft and Final CRSO EIS and the Record of Decision may be found on the following website:

<https://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/CRSO/Final-EIS/#top>

Columbia Basin Fish Accords

~~States, Tribes and the AAs continue to work side by side for the good of endangered salmon and steelhead through the Columbia Basin Fish Accords. The original agreements, signed in 2008, provided states and tribes more than \$900 million to implement projects benefiting salmon, steelhead, and other fish and wildlife, and \$50 million for Pacific lamprey passage improvements at Federal dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers. Accord agreements have been extended until September 30, 2025, with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the states of Idaho and Montana, and the AAs. While these expire in September 2025, the agencies plan on negotiating~~

~~with the partners on long term agreements in the future. Additionally, there is an Accord agreement with the AAs and the Kalispel Tribe of Indians that extends to September 30, 2034. The State of Washington has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with BPA.~~

Commented [JH2]: This MOU has expired and is no longer in place.

Albeni Falls Dam Flexible Winter Power Operations Final Environmental Assessment

The Albeni Falls Dam Flexible Winter Power Operations Final Environmental Assessment (FWPO EA), dated October 2011, evaluated the effects of a BPA proposal that the Corps operate Albeni Falls Dam (AFD) during the winter months to utilize a larger portion of the authorized operating range. The proposal includes storing and discharging water behind AFD for power purposes during the winter months, potentially fluctuating the surface elevation of Lake Pend Oreille between the annual minimum control elevation (MCE) and 2056 feet from about mid-December until March 31 every year. The FWPO EA analysis found that preparation of a new or supplemental EIS was not warranted to implement the FWPO and resulted in the adoption of FWPO as a winter operation at AFD. This document may be found on the following website: <https://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Portals/27/docs/environmental/resources/OlderEnvironmentalDocuments/AFD%20FWPO%20Final%20EA%2011-04-11%20signed%20all.pdf>

Northwest Power and Conservation Council Fish and Wildlife Program

Formatted: Underline

Insert paragraph describing FWP with link <https://www.nwcouncil.org/fish-and-wildlife/>

3. WMP Implementation Process

3.1 Technical Management Team (TMT)

The TMT is an inter-agency technical group comprised of sovereign representatives responsible for making in-season adaptive management recommendations to the AAs on dam and reservoir operations in an effort to meet the expectations of the applicable BiOps (listed above). The TMT responsibilities generally function to address changing conditions, such as water supply, fish migration, water quality, new information, and maintenance issues. The TMT consists of representatives from: the tribes of Nez Perce, Kootenai, Colville, Umatilla, Spokane, Warm Springs, Confederated Salish and Kootenai, and Yakama; the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana; NMFS; USFWS; and the AAs.

3.2 Preparation of the WMP

At the request of several TMT Members to align the 2026 WMP with the 2026 water year (October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026) the AAs updated the 2026 WMP review schedule to provide a draft for TMT review by August 1, 2025, and a final by September 30, 2025. The AAs prepared this WMP for the 2026 water year consistent with the CRSO EIS ROD, as detailed in the Final CRSO EIS, 2020 CRS BiOps, and the 2020 CRS BA. This WMP describes the planned operations of the CRS dams and reservoirs for the 2026 water year. In-season changes in water year 2026 as coordinated at TMT will be documented in the 2026 Seasonal Update to the 2026 WMP. The operations in 2026 WMP are designed to:

1. Implement the actions identified in the CRSO EIS ROD, as detailed in the Final CRSO EIS, 2020 CRS BA, and 2020 CRS BiOps.
2. Implement the requirements outlined in the Incidental Take Statements contained in the 2020 CRS BiOps.
3. Meet other CRS project requirements and purposes such as FRM, hydropower generation, irrigation, navigation, recreation, and conservation of fish and wildlife. Additional information regarding Columbia River FRM may be found on the following website: <http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/Missions/Water/Columbia/Flood-Control/>
4. Take into account recommendations contained in the applicable Northwest Power and Conservation Council’s Fish and Wildlife Program and amendments.

The WMP also includes special operations planned for the year (e.g., tests, maintenance, construction activities, etc.) known at the time the WMP is developed. Throughout the season, the AAs will utilize the TMT forum to provide the region with seasonal updates on water supply forecasts and specific project operations. These will be available on the following website: <https://public.crohms.org/tmt/documents/wmp/>

3.3 Fish Passage Plan (FPP)

The Corps coordinates with regional agencies to prepare an annual Fish Passage Plan (FPP) that provides detailed operating criteria for project fish passage facilities, powerhouses, and spillways to facilitate the safe and efficient passage of migratory fish. The FPP contains appendices that describe special operations for fish research studies, the juvenile fish transportation program, operation of turbine units with respect to 1% of peak efficiency, spill for fish passage, total dissolved gas (TDG) monitoring, and dewatering procedures. The FPP is coordinated through the inter-agency Fish Passage Operations and Maintenance (FPOM) Coordination Team and is available on the following website: <https://public.crohms.org/tmt/documents/fpp/>

3.4 Non-ESA-Listed Fish and Wildlife Conservation Operations

Each year the AAs implement water management actions to achieve other project purposes in addition to those required under the ESA, including: FRM, hydropower generation, irrigation, navigation, recreation, and conservation of fish and wildlife. Table 1 defines non-ESA listed fish and wildlife conservation related water management actions that may be implemented and the time of year such actions typically occur. These actions are further described below.

Table 1. Location and Timing of Water Management Actions Related to non-ESA listed Fish and Wildlife Species.

Project	Water Management Actions for:	Time of Year
Keenleyside (Arrow)	Mountain whitefish	December – January

Commented [JH3]: The WMP draft does not describe what document(s)/process will be used to set operations in the pending (Feb-March of 2026) FPP and FOP. The RIOG review process of the FOP has been very constrained in time and USG responsiveness. Any changes to fish operations need to be coordinated in a meaningful way and be responsive to the dire status of fish populations (i.e. better for fish survival and supportive in achieving healthy and abundant Fish and Wildlife Program goals).

Keenleyside (Arrow)	Rainbow trout	April – June
Duncan	Whitefish	March – May
Libby	Burbot (temperature)	October - February
Dworshak	Hatchery rearing and release (TDG management and increased flow)	March-April
Grand Coulee	Refill for resident fish	September-October
Hanford Reach Fall Chinook Protection Program Agreement	Fall Chinook	October – June
Bonneville	Fall Chinook	October - May

4. Columbia River System Operations

4.1 Priorities

The 2020 CRS BiOps considered the following strategies for flow management:

1. Provide minimum project flows in the fall and winter to support fisheries below the storage projects (e.g., Hungry Horse, Dworshak, Albeni Falls, and Libby). Limit the winter/spring drawdown of storage reservoirs to increase spring flows and the probability of reservoir refill.
2. Draft from storage reservoirs in the summer to increase summer flows.
3. Provide adequate flows in the fall and winter to support mainstem chum spawning and incubation below Bonneville Dam.

To implement these strategies, the AAs have developed the following priorities (in order) for flow management and individual reservoir operations after ensuring adequate FRM is provided:

1. Operate storage projects to meet minimum flow and ramp rate criteria for resident fish.
2. Attempt to refill the storage projects by the end of June/early July (exact date to be determined during in season management) to provide summer flow augmentation consistent with available water supply, spring operations, and FRM requirements (2020 NMFS BiOp,

page 52). For example, a late snowmelt runoff may result in a later refill to prevent excessive spill. Target refill dates for the storage projects are listed below in Table 5.

3. Operate storage projects to be at their FRM elevation in early April (the exact date to be determined during in-season management) to maximize flows for the spring out-migration of juvenile salmon (2020 NMFS BiOp, page 52¹).
4. Operate Grand Coulee to balance the needs of chum flow augmentation and spring flow augmentation from the start of chum spawning in November through the end of chum emergence (approximately April) to maintain sufficient water depth to protect chum spawning and incubation habitat at the Ives Island complex below Bonneville Dam.

Operations are intended to benefit ESA-listed anadromous fish and to benefit ESA-listed resident fishes (e.g., bull trout, Kootenai River white sturgeon) that may be affected by CRS operations. Projects are also operated to meet minimum outflows; avoid involuntary spill and resulting elevated TDG; avoid fluctuations in outflow that may strand fish and degrade fish habitat; and to provide specific releases from storage projects to improve downstream flows and water temperatures for fish. These operations are generally the highest priority because of the direct linkage between a particular operation and impacts on fish near the dam.

Because the water year begins on October 1, the flow objectives described in the 2020 CRS BA, (page 2-33) are not encountered in the same order as various operations described in the 2020 NMFS BiOp (e.g., chum spawning flows will be determined prior to spring and summer migration flows, even though chum flows are a lower priority (2020 NMFS BiOp, page 987)). However, the AAs will make every effort to follow flow priorities while implementing operations as they occur chronologically during the year. Objectives include:

1. Drafting storage projects to their August 31 or September 30 elevation targets (2020 NMFS BiOp, page 52) are a higher priority than the summer flow objectives (2020 CRS BA, page 2-33) in order to meet other project uses and reserve water in storage for the following year.
2. Operate storage projects to be at their FRM elevation in early April (the exact date to be determined during in-season management) (2020 CRS BA, page 2-33). These levels will vary with the runoff forecast. The ability to meet this objective is affected by the quantity of water released for FRM, changes in runoff volume forecasts, power generation and unit availability, planned and unplanned pool restrictions, draft rate restrictions, water quality, and fishery flows to support both lower Columbia River chum and Hanford Reach fall Chinook spawning, as well as minimum flow requirements below the projects.
3. Attempt to refill the storage projects by the end of June/early July (exact date to be determined during in season management) to provide summer flow augmentation consistent with available water supply, spring operations, and FRM requirements (2020 NMFS BiOp, page 52). Through TMT and in-season management, priority for spring flow may be adjusted with a recognition that summer refill may be compromised.

¹ The citations provided herein refer to the description of the Proposed Action as summarized in the relevant BiOp(s). For a full description of the Proposed Action, see the 2020 CRS BA.

4. Manage the available storage to augment summer (July and August) flows in the lower Columbia River and lower Snake River in an attempt to meet flow objectives and to minimize increases in water temperature, as described below in the project-specific sections (Section 6).

These objectives are intended as general guidelines. Consistent with actions considered in the current BiOps, the AAs adaptively manage to adjust CRS operations based on the best available science, knowledge about current conditions in the system, and effects of management actions. Conditions that are continually changing include: information on fish migration, stock status, biological requirements, biological effectiveness, and hydrologic and environmental conditions.

4.2 Conflicts

System managers recognize that water supply conditions are variable and unpredictable and there is often insufficient water to accomplish all the objectives addressed in the current BiOps for the benefit of listed fish. This may be further complicated by responsibilities to provide for other authorized purposes such as FRM, hydropower generation, irrigation, recreation, and navigation needs. Management of water resources for any one fish species may conflict with the availability of water for other fish species or other project purposes. The AAs, in coordination with regional sovereign representatives through the TMT, consider the multiple uses of the system, while prioritizing measures to benefit listed species. Below are some of the typical conflicts that may occur.

4.2.1 FRM Draft versus Project Refill

The 2020 CRS BA specifies operation of storage projects at their FRM elevation targets in early April (the exact dates to be determined during in-season management) (2020 CRS BA, page 2-33). This is designed to increase the likelihood of refill and to maximize both spring flow management and summer flow augmentation.

FRM procedures specify the amount of storage needed to provide flood damage reduction. In furtherance of the flood damage reduction objective, storage space is provided to minimize the risk due to forecast and runoff uncertainty. In an effort to reduce forecast error and to better anticipate the runoff timing or water supply, the AAs and the Northwest River Forecast Center (NWRFC) use the best available science to compute water supply forecasts.

4.2.2 Spring Flow Management versus Project Refill and Summer Flow Augmentation

FRM elevations are determined based on water supply, runoff and hydrologic model forecasts and can change significantly from one forecast to the next. Changes in forecasts throughout the FRM season can make it difficult to achieve spring flow and project refill objectives. The summer flow objective at McNary is supported by various flow augmentation measures. There is a limited amount of water available for flow augmentation and summer flow objectives are provided as a biological guideline.

4.2.3 Chum Flow versus Project Refill and Spring Flow Management

Providing a Bonneville Dam tailwater elevation level conducive to chum spawning, incubation, and emergence in the Ives Island complex typically requires flow augmentation from storage reservoirs before reliable flow forecast information becomes available. The proposed continuation of operations for chum spawning, incubation, and egress will improve chum productivity; however, maintaining chum flow augmentation throughout the winter and early spring has the potential to jeopardize spring refill objectives at Grand Coulee Dam during low water years. When this scenario arises, the TMT may recommend dewatering chum redds in the mainstem Ives/Pierce Island area. Tailwater elevations for the spawning operation are set in November through December in coordination with the TMT. The minimum tailwater for incubation and emergence is set at the end of spawning in December based on redd elevation data and is held as a minimum through emergence. See Section 7.3 for more information on Bonneville Chum operations.

The minimum tailwater is set in December when early water supply forecasts are available but have very large forecast errors. Water supply forecasts become incrementally more reliable as time between the forecast and the forecast period decreases. If the flowrate needed to maintain the protection tailwater elevation requires augmentation from storage at Grand Coulee it may increase the risk of missing the spring refill objective in early April. TMT may need to coordinate a reduction in flow during the incubation period to prioritize spring refill at Grand Coulee, risking the dewatering of chum redds below Bonneville Dam. During the emergence period, the AAs will report to TMT which will discuss balancing project refill and spring flows that benefit multiple ESUs that have priority over maintaining the protection tailwater elevation set in December.

4.2.4 Libby Dam Sturgeon Flow versus Summer Flow Augmentation

Water released from Libby Dam during spring (between mid-May and late June) to provide Kootenai River White Sturgeon spawning flows (tiered volume shaped to optimize flow and stage at Bonners Ferry) can reduce the probability of reservoir refill, and consequently the amount of the water available for summer flow augmentation from Libby Dam. Although an effort will be made to balance sturgeon flows and reservoir refill, water released for sturgeon spawning flows will take a higher priority than refilling by early July.

4.2.5 Fish Operations versus Other Project Uses

In addition to FRM operations, there are other project purposes that may conflict with operations for the benefit of fish. For example, operations for irrigation and reservoir recreation may conflict with releases of water for flow augmentation. TMT will discuss these issues when they arise and may make recommendations to the AAs with responsibility for the operational decisions.

4.2.6 Conflicts and Priorities Summary

The conflicts described above pose many challenges to the AAs in meeting the multiple uses of the CRS. The priorities for flow management and individual reservoir operations outlined in Section 4.1 assist the AAs in operational decision-making.

Discussion of conflicts between operational requirements and alternatives for addressing such conflicts will occur in TMT. Ultimately, the AA with the authority and responsibility for the operation to meet authorized project purposes will make the decision.

4.3 Emergencies

The WMP, the 2020 CRS BiOps, and the current FPP acknowledge that emergencies and other unexpected events occur and may cause interruptions or adjustments of fish protection measures. Such deviations may be short in duration, such as a response to an unexpected unit outage or power line failure, or a search and rescue operation, or longer in duration. Emergency operations will be managed in accordance with the TMT Emergency Protocols (included in the WMP as Appendix 1), the FPP, and other appropriate AA emergency procedures.

4.3.1 Operational Emergencies

The AAs will manage interruptions or adjustments in water management actions, which may occur due to unforeseen power system, FRM, navigation, dam safety, or other emergencies. Such emergency actions will be viewed by the AAs as a last resort and will only be used in place of operations outlined in the annual WMP if necessary. Emergency operations will be managed in accordance with TMT Emergency Protocols, the FPP and other appropriate AA emergency procedures and coordinated through TMT when practicable. The AAs will take all reasonable steps to limit the duration of any interruption in fish protection measures. Emergency Action Plans for generation and transmission emergencies are provided as an Attachment to the TMT Emergency Protocols.

4.3.2 Fish Emergencies

The AAs will manage operations for fish passage and protection measures at CRS facilities. The intended operation may be modified for brief periods of time due to unexpected equipment failures or other conditions. These events can result in short periods when projects are operating outside normal specifications due to unexpected or emergency events. Where there are significant biological effects of more than short duration emergencies impacting fish, the AAs will coordinate with the Regional Forum (2020 CRS BA, page 2-71) to develop and implement appropriate adaptive management actions to address the situation. The AAs will take all reasonable steps to limit the duration of any fish emergency. The AAs will operate in accordance with the TMT Emergency Protocols identified in Appendix 1 of the WMP.

4.3.3 Emergency Operations for Non-ESA listed Fish

The AAs agree to take reasonable actions to aid non-ESA listed fish during brief periods of time due to unexpected equipment failures or other conditions and when significant detrimental

biological effects are anticipated or likely to have occurred. When there is a conflict in such operations, operations for ESA-listed fish will take priority.

4.4 Fish Research

Research studies may require special operations that differ from routine operations otherwise considered in the 2020 CRS BiOps, and described in the current FPP. These studies are generally developed through technical workgroups of the Regional Forum (e.g., the Corps' Anadromous Fish Evaluation Program, Fish Facilities Design Review Work Group, and Studies Review Work Group). Specific research operations are further described in the Corps' FPP (Appendix A) and the AAs' seasonal updates to the WMP. In most cases, operations associated with research entail relatively minor changes from routine operations and are coordinated in regional technical forums (e.g., TMT and/or FPOM). In some cases, the nature or magnitude of operational changes for research may require further coordination and review in policy forums [e.g., Hydro Coordination Senior Technical Team (HCT) or Regional Implementation and Oversight Group (RIOG)]. Generally, research planning and coordination occurs throughout the late fall and winter, with final research plans established by late winter/early spring. If extraordinary events occur, such as extreme runoff conditions (high or low) or a system emergency, planned research may be modified prior to implementation to accommodate anticipated unique circumstances and/or to reallocate resources to obtain the greatest value given the circumstances.

4.5 FRM Shifts

The AAs will look for opportunities to shift system FRM requirements from Brownlee and Dworshak to Grand Coulee periodically from January through April to improve the probability for increased flows in the Snake River during the spring migration. The shift will be based upon end-of-month FRM elevations as stated in the official water supply forecasts produced early each month (see section 5.2 for additional information on water supply forecasts) during this period. Consideration of these FRM shifts by the Corps will include an analysis of impacts to FRM and will not be implemented if FRM would be compromised. These shifts may be implemented after coordination with the Corps and Reclamation. The reservoirs must be back to their specific system FRM elevations by April 30. FRM elevations including FRM shifts may be found on the following website:

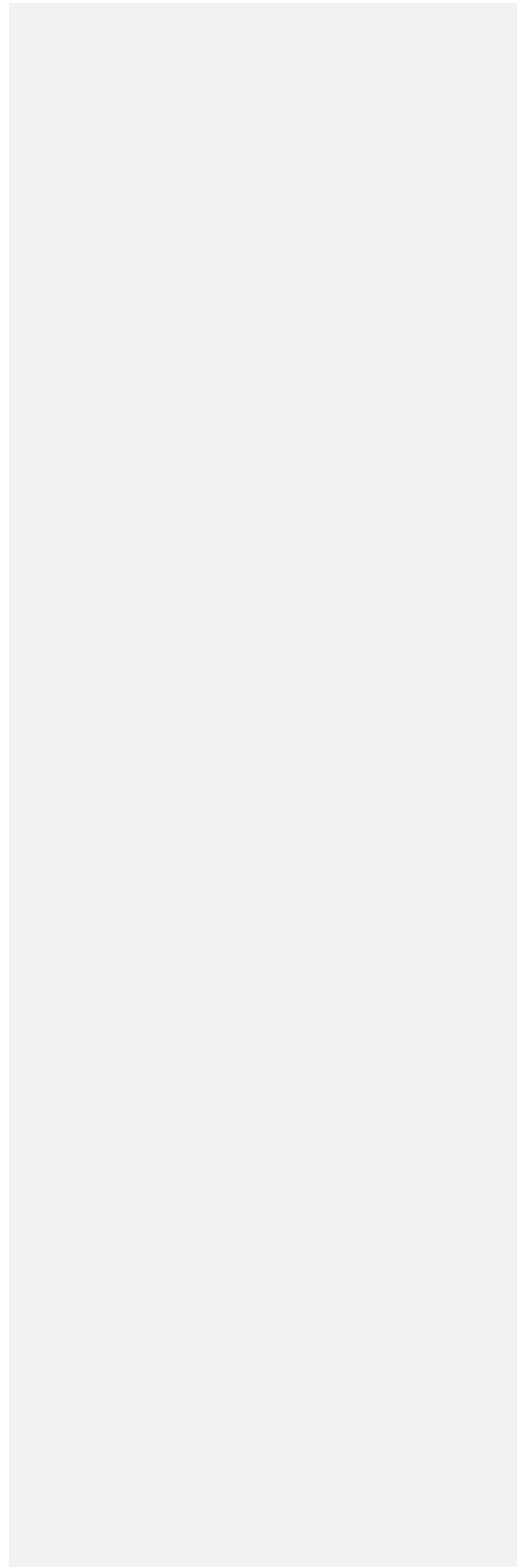
https://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/report/flood_risk/

5. Decision Points and Water Supply Forecasts

5.1 Water Management Decisions and Actions

Table 2 below lists times associated with key water management decisions/actions. Some decision points, such as setting flow objectives, are described in the 2020 CRS BA. Other decision points, such as setting weekly flow augmentation levels, require thorough discussion and coordination. The decision points given below are spelled out in the 2020 CRS BA or are based on best professional judgment and expertise. These decisions are made by the AAs in

consideration of actions analyzed in the BiOps, and input received through the Regional Forums (TMT, RIOG, and Regional Executives).



DRAFT 2026 Water Management Plan
August 1, 2025

Table 2. Water Management Decision Points/Actions.

August	September	October	November	Winter (December–March)	April	May	June	July
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Snake Projects: Minimum operating pool (MOP) operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 Fish Operations Plan (2026 FOP). • Grand Coulee: target summer draft limit determined by July WSF for The Dalles Apr-Aug. • Dworshak: Draft to no lower than 1535 feet (65 feet from full) by end of Aug., unless modified per the Agreement between U.S. and Nez Perce Tribe for water use in the Dworshak Reservoir. • Regulate outflow temperatures to attempt to maintain water temperatures in the Lower Granite Dam tailwater and trap (see section 6.8.3). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albeni Falls: Begin fall draft of Lake Pend Oreille in mid to late Sep targeting 2060-2061 feet at the end of Sep. • Libby: Stable flows to protect bull trout and other resident fish while targeting 5 to 20 feet from full by end of Sep. • Hungry Horse: Stable flows to protect bull trout and other resident fish while targeting 10 to 20 feet from full by end of Sep. • Dworshak: Draft to 1520 feet (80 feet from full) by end of Sep, unless modified per the Agreement between U.S. and Nez Perce Tribe for water use in the Dworshak Reservoir. • Regulate outflow temperatures to attempt to maintain water temperatures in the Lower Granite Dam tailwater and trap (see section 6.8.2). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonneville: Assess potential tailwater elevations to support chum spawning. • Storage Projects: Preliminary discussions of FRM/project refill strategy. • Support for Hanford Reach fall Chinook protection operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hanford Reach fall Chinook redd protection level set. • Bonneville: Set Tailwater elevations to support chum spawning. • Lower Snake – Set abundance triggers for zero flow operations. • Albeni Falls: draft to 2051-2051.5 feet by mid-Nov for kokanee spawning. • Libby Dam: minimize discharge temperature for Kootenai River burbot spawning (through March) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonneville: Determine winter/ spring chum redd protection tailwater elevation. • Storage Projects: Determine FRM and refill strategies, including any available FRM shifts. • Determine final spring refill objectives based on FCEs and WSFs. • Hungry Horse, Columbia Falls: Min flows set by Jan, Feb, Mar WSF for Apr-Aug. • Dworshak: Determine flexibility to operate above min flow and still reach spring refill targets. • Libby: Monthly Corps WSF determines end of month FRM elevations. • Grand Coulee: Use March WSF at The Dalles for Apr-Sep to determine if Lake Roosevelt Inc. Storage draft is 82.5 KAF or 132.5 KAF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring flow objectives set by April WSFs. • Determine spring flow management strategy including priority for refill. • Lower Snake Projects: MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP. • John Day: Apr 10 begin predator disruption operations for Blalock Island Caspian terns (264.5-266.5 feet) to June 1 (may extend to June 15). • Storage Projects: Determine refill start date based on streamflow forecast to exceed ICF at The Dalles. • Libby, Hungry Horse: If required, use April WSF to determine VARQ refill flows. • Storage Projects: When not at min flows, operate to spring refill objectives determined by in-season management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libby: Evaluate likely tier for sturgeon volume using May WSF. Regional FPIP technical team recommends shape, timing of sturgeon pulse. • Libby: Minimum outflow 6 kcfs for bull trout from May 15 – 31, and May WSF tiered minimum (6-9 kcfs) until sturgeon op begins. • Libby: Use May WSF to calculate tiered bull trout flow (6-9 kcfs) for post-sturgeon flow through Aug. • Storage Projects: Determine refill start date based on streamflow forecast to exceed ICF at The Dalles (if not in April). • Libby/Hungry Horse: Use May WSF to determine VARQ refill flows. • Libby: Use local seasonal water supply forecast (Apr-Aug) to determine Sep draft target. • Hungry Horse: Use local May WSF for May-Sep to determine Sep draft target. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Granite: Summer flow objective determined by June WSF. • Libby, Hungry Horse: Use June WSF to determine VARQ refill flows. • Determine summer flow augmentation strategy (early June). • Dworshak: Refill by about June 30 or earlier in dry years. • Begin Dworshak temperature modeling. • Regulate outflow temperatures to attempt to maintain water temperatures in the Lower Granite Dam tailwater and trap (see section 6.8.3) • John Day: Begin MIP operation in early June (no later than June 15) through Aug 31. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Coulee: summer draft limit determined by July WSF for The Dalles Apr-Aug. • Libby, Hungry Horse: Estimate stable flows that will draft for salmon. • Libby: Refill probability is likely later in July (exact date determined in-season). • Dworshak: Regulate outflow temperatures to attempt to maintain water temperatures in the Lower Granite Dam tailwater and trap (see section 6.8.3).

5.2 Water Supply Forecasts (WSF)

Water supply forecasts (WSF) serve as a guide to how much water may be available for fish and other operations. Flow projections are provided to the TMT regularly during the fish passage season (April 3 – August 31).

The Northwest River Forecast Center (NWRFC), Corps, Reclamation, and others prepare water supply forecasts to manage the Columbia and Snake rivers, and implement actions considered in the 2020 CRS BiOps (Tables 3 and 4 below).²

In 2026, the NWRFC 50% exceedance value for the 10-day initialized ESP forecast (ESP10) for The Dalles, Dworshak, and Lower Granite, released closest to or prior to the 3rd working day of the month will be used as the official forecast for each month and will be the default forecast for calculating system FRM.

Table 3. Forecast Designations.

Date	Forecast Designation
January 6, 2026	January
February 4, 2026	February
March 4, 2026	March
April 3, 2026	April
May 5, 2026	May
June 3, 2026	June
July 6, 2026	July

² Monthly water supply forecasts for January-July are posted online at:
<https://public.crohms.org/tmt/documents/WSF/>

Table 4. Water Supply Forecasts Used to Implement BiOp Actions (See Table 5 for project-specific operations).

Forecast Point	Forecast period	Forecast	BiOp Actions to be Determined
Hungry Horse	April – August Provided by Reclamation	January, February, March	Sets min. flows at Hungry Horse and Columbia Falls
	May – September Provided by Reclamation	January, February, March	Sets VARQ FRM targets
		April	Sets VARQ FRM targets and VARQ refill flows
		May	Sets VARQ refill flows Sets end of September draft target
		June	Sets VARQ refill flows
The Dalles	April – September Provided by NWRFC	March	Sets Columbia River Water Management Program (CRWMP) adjustments at Grand Coulee
	April – August Provided by NWRFC	April	Sets spring flow objective at McNary Dam
		July	Sets end of August draft limit at Grand Coulee
Lower Granite	April – July Provided by NWRFC	April	Sets spring flow objective at Lower Granite
		June	Sets summer flow objective at Lower Granite
Libby	April – August Provided by Corps Seattle District	December	Sets end of December FRM draft requirement
		January, February, March	Sets VARQ FRM requirement
		April	Sets VARQ FRM requirement and VARQ refill flows
		May	Sets Libby min. sturgeon flow volume and min. bull trout flows for after sturgeon pulse through Sep Sets VARQ FRM targets and VARQ refill flows Sets end of September draft target
		June	VARQ refill flows
Dworshak	April – July Provided by NWRFC	January to March	Manage for reservoir FRM, VDL, and Flood Control Refill Curve (FCRC)
		April to June	Manage for reservoir FRM and FCRC

6. Project Operations

Table 5 summarizes the major fish-related reservoir and flow operations by project, consistent with the proposed action considered in the 2020 CRS BiOps. More detailed descriptions of each of these operations by project follow the table.

Table 5. Project Operations for ESA-listed Fish Species.

Project	FRM & Project Refill	Kootenai River White Sturgeon	Bull Trout	Spring Anadromous	Summer Anadromous	Chum
Libby (section 6.4)	<p><u>Winter:</u> Operate to VARQ FRM rule curve and achieve target elevation by April 10 if possible.</p> <p><u>Spring:</u> Adhere to VARQ Operating Procedures, supply tiered volume for sturgeon and minimum flow for bull trout.</p> <p><u>Summer:</u> Provide summer flow augmentation, bull trout min flow, refill. Exact date determined in-season dependent on available water supply, shape, and spring flow operations, while avoiding involuntary spill and meeting FRM objectives.</p>	<p><u>May–July:</u> Provide sturgeon tiered volume to augment flow at Bonners Ferry.</p>	<p><u>Year-Round:</u> Maintain project minimum flow requirement of 4 kcfs. Operate using ramping rates to minimize adverse effects of flow fluctuations.</p> <p><u>May 15–Sep 30:</u> Operate to bull trout minimum flow requirements. Maintain steady outflow if possible Jul–Sep while targeting draft to end of Sep sliding scale elevation, between 2439 and 2454, based on May final forecast for April-August runoff at Libby Dam. Full pool is 2459 feet, refill target is 2454.0 feet.</p>	Operate to meet refill and support flow objectives if possible without jeopardizing FRM, meeting sturgeon volume goals and not exceeding TDG limits.	<p><u>September:</u> Target draft to end-of-Sep sliding scale elevation, between 2439 and 2454, based on May final forecast for April-August runoff at Libby Dam. Full Pool is 2459 feet.</p>	Fall/winter storage may be used to support chum flows.
Hungry Horse (section 6.2)	<p><u>Winter:</u> Operate to VARQ FRM rule curves and no lower than the VDL which ensures 75% probability of meeting the April elevation objective.</p>	N/A	<p><u>Year-Round:</u> Maintain Columbia Falls and project (South Fork) minimum flow requirements. Operate using ramping rates to minimize adverse effects of flow fluctuations and maintain near steady outflow if possible Jul–Sep.</p> <p>Draft during Jul-Sep to a target elevation ranging from 3550 to 3540 feet (10 to 20 feet from full) by Sep 30 as determined by the May water supply forecast.</p>	Refill around June 30 (if possible) without excessive spill and operate to help meet flow objectives without exceeding TDG limits.	<p><u>September:</u> Draft during Jul-Sep to a target elevation ranging from 3550 to 3540 feet (10 to 20 feet from full) by Sep 30 based on the water supply forecast. Full Pool is 3560 feet.</p>	N/A

DRAFT 2026 Water Management Plan
August 1, 2025

Project	FRM & Project Refill	Kootenai River White Sturgeon	Bull Trout	Spring Anadromous	Summer Anadromous	Chum
Albeni Falls (section 6.3)	<u>Winter</u> : Operate within standard FRM criteria. <u>Spring</u> : Refill typically by June 30.	N/A	<u>Fall/Winter</u> : Winter minimum control elevation will be 2051 feet by mid-Nov. Operate from 2051-2051.5 feet until stable lake elevation is no longer required to support kokanee spawning as coordinated with IDFG no later than December 31. After end of stable lake operation to support kokanee spawning, operate not to exceed FRM rule curve but not below minimum control elevation.	N/A	N/A	<u>Fall/Winter</u> : Storage may be used to support chum flows.
Grand Coulee (section 6.5)	<u>Winter</u> : Operate for FRM and no lower than the VDL. <u>Spring</u> : Refill after the Independence Day (4 th of July) holiday each year (exact date to be determined during in-season management).	N/A	N/A	Operate to help support Spring flow objectives below Priest Rapids and McNary. During Jan-Apr maintain 85% confidence of achieving spring refill objectives.	<u>July-August</u> : Draft to support salmon flow objectives during Jul-Aug with variable draft limit of 1280 to 1278 feet by Aug 31 based on the WSF. ³ <u>August</u> : Reduce pumping into Banks Lake and allow Banks Lake to draft up to 5 feet from full (1565 feet ⁴) to help meet salmon flow.	<u>Fall/Winter</u> : Storage may be used to support chum flows.
Dworshak (section 6.8)	<u>Winter</u> : Operate for FRM, VDL, and FCRC, through March 31st <u>Spring</u> : Operate for FRM, flow objectives for hatchery releases, and refill by about June 30 or earlier in dry years. Grand Coulee/Dworshak shift.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Summer draft no lower than 1535 feet by end of Aug and draft to 1520 feet (80 feet from full) by end of Sep, unless modified per the Agreement between U.S. and Nez Perce Tribe for water use in the Dworshak Reservoir.	<u>Fall/Winter</u>: Storage may be used to support chum flows, if 95% refill can be maintained. N/A

³ These draft limits will be modified by the *Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project* (Section 7.5).

⁴ These draft limits will be modified by the *Odessa Subarea Partial Groundwater Replacement* (Section 6.5.3).

DRAFT 2026 Water Management Plan
August 1, 2025

Project	FRM & Project Refill	Kootenai River White Sturgeon	Bull Trout	Spring Anadromous	Summer Anadromous	Chum
Lower Granite (section 6.10)	Pool can be drafted as low as 724 feet to protect levees during high flows.	N/A	N/A	Flow objective of 85-100 kcfs. MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.	Flow objective of 50-55 kcfs. MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.	N/A
Little Goose (section 6.10)	N/A	N/A	N/A	MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.	MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.	N/A
Lower Monumental (section 6.10)	N/A	N/A	N/A	MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.	MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.	N/A
Ice Harbor (section 6.10)	N/A	N/A	N/A	MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.	MOP operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.	N/A
McNary (section 6.11)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Flow objective of 220-260 kcfs.	Flow objective of 200 kcfs.	N/A
John Day (section 6.11)	Reservoir may be operated between 257 and 268 feet for FRM objectives	N/A	N/A	Operate from 264.5 to 266.5 feet, April 10 to June 1 (may be as late as June 15), to decrease avian predation on ESA-listed juvenile salmon and steelhead in the lower Columbia River.	Operate within 2.0 feet of minimum level that maintains irrigation pumping (262.5-264.5 feet), from early June through August 31.	When storage space allows and not in conflict with FRM, the use of John Day storage space will contribute to maintaining chum tailwater criteria.
The Dalles (section 6.11)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bonneville (section 6.11)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Operate discharge to manage the project tailwater (Tanner Creek) to provide access to spawning habitat for protection through emergence for chum spawning at Ives Island immediately downstream on the Oregon shore 0.9 miles downstream of PH1

Commented [JH4]: Is this correct or is it 733?

Commented [JH5]: Any changes to fish operations need to be coordinated in a meaningful way and be responsive to the dire status of fish populations (i.e. better for fish survival and supportive in achieving healthy and abundant Fish and Wildlife Program goals).

6.1 Hugh Keenleyside Dam (Arrow Canadian Project)

6.1.1 Mountain Whitefish Flows

Canada has been testing Arrow flow regimes for mountain whitefish spawning over the last several years. Desirable spawning flow levels are defined by Canada and may be modified annually. The historically desired operation is an Arrow outflow between 45-55 kcfs beginning the third week in December and continuing through mid-January. Egg protection flows are generally about 19 kcfs lower than the spawning flow from mid-January through the end of March. Canada has indicated that the level of whitefish protection will be determined by BC Hydro in consultation with Canadian regulators. For water year 2026, as in previous years, a negotiated annual agreement (Non Power Uses Agreement) under the Treaty is expected to reflect the flow objectives for whitefish.

6.1.2 Rainbow Trout Flows

Rainbow trout spawning typically begins in April. The Canadian objective is to provide stable or increasing river levels downstream of Arrow between April 1 and June 30. For water year 2026, as in previous years, provision of these flows is expected to be negotiated through an annual agreement (Non Power Uses Agreement) under the Treaty. The level of trout spawning protection for 2026 will be determined by BC Hydro in consultation with Canadian regulators.

6.1.3 Flood Risk Management

Pre-planned FRM operations as specified in the Treaty “Arrow 3.6 Million Acre-Feet Flood Risk Operating Plan” dated June 26, 2025 will include the evacuation of up to 3.6 million acre-feet (MAF) at Arrow Lakes Reservoir in water year 2026 in accordance with upper rule curves derived from the storage reservation diagram in that plan (corresponding storage volumes shown in Table 6). The storage reservation diagram is also posted at <https://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/CRWM/Forecasts/>. This FRM storage is pre-planned and has been secured for water year 2026. The Treaty also provides a mechanism for the U.S. to call upon Canada for additional storage in Canada to address U.S. flooding when conditions warrant.

Table 6: Required End-of-Month Arrow Volume (MAF)

Beginning of Month Forecast of April to August Columbia River Flow at the Dalles (MAF)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
0	0.25	0.25	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71
60	0.25	0.25	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71
64	0.25	0.25	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71
65	0.25	0.25	0.71	0.78	0.85	0.92	0.92

80	0.25	0.25	0.71	1.67	2.24	3.6	3.6
90	0.25	0.25	0.71	1.67	2.64	3.6	3.6

6.2 Hungry Horse Dam

Hungry Horse Dam is operated for multiple purposes including fish and wildlife, FRM, hydroelectric generation, and recreation. Specific operations for flow management to aid anadromous and resident fish are listed in the following sections.

6.2.1 Winter/Spring Operations

During the winter and early spring, Hungry Horse will operate to meet minimum downstream flow requirements, meet FRM objectives, and provide power/operational flexibility to achieve a 75% probability of reaching its elevation objective in April or as decided in-season to provide more water for spring flows. This is achieved by operating between the FRM elevation as an upper limit and the Variable Draft Limits (VDL) as a lower operating limit for the reservoir and will continue to target the April 10th elevation objective for the calculation. Streamflow, in season forecasts, and real time conditions influence the exact date that the upper rule curve (URC) will be reached in coordination with TMT. The URC is the maximum elevation allowed for FRM and is calculated by using the Storage Reservation Diagram (SRD) developed for VARQ FRM. A description of VDL is provided in Section 7.4. Reclamation computes Hungry Horse Dam’s April 10 elevation by linear interpolation between the March 31 and April 15 forecasted FRM elevations based on the Reclamation Hungry Horse March Final WSF for the May – September period.

Reclamation and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) will annually coordinate on Hungry Horse Dam discharge to help ensure consistent conditions during trout population estimates conducted in the mainstem Flathead River. Ideally, this will create a relatively constant discharge during a two-to three-week period at the USGS gage in Columbia Falls, MT during February through the end of March.

Refill at Hungry Horse usually begins approximately ten days prior to when streamflow forecasts of unregulated flow is projected to exceed the Initial Control Flow (ICF) at The Dalles, Oregon. During refill, discharges from Hungry Horse are determined using inflow volume forecasts, streamflow forecasts, weather forecasts, and the VARQ Operating Procedures. Other factors such as local FRM are also considered when determining refill operations. During the latter part of the FRM drawdown season (April) and the refill season (typically May through June), Hungry Horse discharges may be reduced for local flood protection in the Flathead Valley. In 2014 the official flood stage for the Flathead River at Columbia Falls, Montana was modified to 13 feet (approximate flow 44,000 cubic feet per second (cfs)) when Flathead Lake elevation is within 1 foot of full (2,892-2,893 feet).

A Columbia Falls flood stage of 14 feet (approximately 51,000 cfs) is used when the pool elevation of Flathead Lake is more than 1 foot below full pool (2,892 feet or lower). If possible, FRM operations begin at a Columbia Falls flood stage of 13 ft (approximately 44,300 cfs) when

the pool elevation at Flathead Lake is within the top 1 foot (El 2,892-2,893 ft). However, depending on the remaining runoff volume and available reservoir space, Hungry Horse may not start reducing discharges until Columbia Falls reaches levels higher than these criteria.

Often during the spring, changes in FRM, transmission limitations, and generation unit availability will require adaptive management actions for real-time operations to control refill and make best attempts to avoid spill.

6.2.2 Selective Withdrawal System (SWS) Coordination, Operation, and Maintenance

Through coordination between Reclamation and Montana FWP, the SWS is operated to normalize water temperatures downstream of Hungry Horse Dam to benefit ecosystem productivity. Details can be found in Appendix 7.

Dam operators monitor thermal stratification in the reservoir and adjust the SWS to release water from appropriate depths in an attempt to match daily temperature targets during late June through early November. During SWS operation, warm water flows over adjustable control gates into the turbines. Temperature management ends in late September to early November when the reservoir surface cools and the thermal gradient weakens, and the SWS must be prepared for winter. Winter discharge temperature is approximately 4°C, which artificially warms the Flathead River that naturally cooled to 0°C prior to dam operation.

In 2024, Reclamation purchased a Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV) to perform underwater inspections of the SWS in order to minimize the number of times the reservoir is required to be drawn down for maintenance. SWS maintenance was last completed in 2023 and before the purchase of the ROV was required at a minimum of 1 in every 3 years. If inspections with the ROV this fall indicate SWS maintenance is required, Hungry Horse will need to be at or below elevation 3,525 feet during early-April for 2 to 3 weeks, regardless of the required FRM elevation for that year.

6.2.3 Summer Operations

Hungry Horse will operate to refill around June 30 to provide summer flow augmentation, except as specifically provided by the TMT. However, the timing and shape of the spring runoff may result in reservoir refill before or after June 30. For example, a late snowmelt runoff may delay refill to sometime after June 30 in order to avoid excessive spill.

During the summer, Hungry Horse is drafted within the 2020 CRS BA specified draft limits (Table 6). The flow levels are set to meet the end of September target elevation based on the best information available and are coordinated with TMT. Hungry Horse discharges during the summer months should be stable or gradually declining to minimize a double peak on the Flathead River.

The summer operation will target a reservoir elevation of 3550 feet to 3540 feet (10 feet to 20 feet from full) by September 30 which is interpolated based on the water supply forecast. Table 7 shows the end of September targets based on the Reclamation Hungry Horse May Final WSF

for the May – September period. However, especially during drought years, minimum flow requirements (see Section 6.2.5) may draft the reservoir below the end of September target elevation.

Table 7. Hungry Horse End of September Elevation Targets

Hungry Horse May-September inflow forecast (KAF)	Hungry Horse forebay target on Sept 30 (ft)
< 1410	3540
1410 – 1580	Interpolate between 3540-3550
> 1580	3550

Operations in September are primarily focused on benefiting ESA-listed bull trout and other resident fish species downstream of the dam. The intent is to maintain steady or gradually declining flows in the Flathead River. Hungry Horse may draft slightly above or below the end of September draft target depending on inflows and minimum flow requirements. Hungry Horse may end the month at an elevation above the end of September draft limit if inflows are higher than were forecasted in the planned operation. Hungry Horse may end the month at an elevation below the end of September draft limit due to minimum flow requirements and if inflows are lower than were forecasted in the planned operation.

6.2.5 Minimum Flows and Ramp Rates

The following minimum flows and ramp rates help guide project operations to meet various purposes, including power production. Minimum flows and ramp rates were identified in the 2020 USFWS BiOp for Hungry Horse Dam to protect resident fish and their food organisms in the Flathead River.

There are two minimum flow requirements for Hungry Horse Dam. One is for the South Fork of the Flathead River below the project, and the second is at Columbia Falls on the mainstem Flathead River, located just downstream from the confluence of the South Fork with the mainstem. The minimum flows for both sites are determined based on the Reclamation WSF for the inflows to Hungry Horse for the period April 1 through August 31. These minimum flows are determined monthly based on the January and February forecasts, and then set for the remainder of the year using the March final runoff forecast. Table 8 shows how the minimum flows are calculated⁵. The minimum flow requirements generally govern Hungry Horse

⁵ 2020 CRS BA, page 240.

discharges in the fall unless the static FRM levels require discharges greater than the minimum flow to maintain the required space in the reservoir through the end of December.

Table 8. Minimum Flows at Hungry Horse and Columbia Falls.

Hungry Horse Apr–Aug inflow forecast (KAF)	Hungry Horse min flow ^a (CFS)	Columbia Falls min flow (CFS)
< 1190	400	3200
1190 - 1790	Interpolate between 400-900	Interpolate between 3200-3500
> 1790	900	3500

a. To prevent or minimize flooding on the Flathead River above Flathead Lake, Hungry Horse discharges can be reduced to a minimum flow of 300 cfs when the stage at Columbia Falls exceeds 13 feet.

The maximum ramp up and ramp down rates are detailed in Table 9. The daily and hourly ramping rates may be exceeded during flood emergencies to protect health and public safety and in association with power or transmission emergencies. The ramp rates will be followed except when they would cause a unit(s) to operate in a rough zone, a zone of chaotic flow in which all parts of a unit(s) are subject to increased vibration and cavitation that could result in premature wear or failure of the unit(s). In this case, the project will utilize ramping rates which allows all units to operate outside the rough zone.

Table 9. Hungry Horse Dam Ramping Rates.

Daily and Hourly Maximum Ramp Up Rates for Hungry Horse Dam (as measured by daily flows, not daily averages, restricted by hourly rates)		
Flow Range (measured at Columbia Falls)	Ramp Up Unit Limit (daily max)	Ramp Up Unit Limit (hourly max)
3200 - 6000 cfs	1800 cfs/day	1000 cfs/hour
>6000 - 8000 cfs	1800 cfs/day	1000 cfs/hour
>8000 - 10000 cfs	3600 cfs/day	1800 cfs/hour
>10000 cfs	No limit	1800 cfs/hour

Daily and Hourly Maximum Ramp Down Rates for Hungry Horse Dam (as measured by daily flows, not daily averages, restricted by hourly rates)		
Flow Range (measured at Columbia Falls)	Ramp Down Unit Limit (daily max)	Ramp Down Unit Limit (hourly max)
3200 - 6000 cfs	600 cfs/day	600 cfs/hour
>6000 - 8000 cfs	1000 cfs/day	600 cfs/hour
>8000 - 12000 cfs	2000 cfs/day	1000 cfs/hour
>12000 cfs	5000 cfs/day	1800 cfs/hour

6.2.6 Spill Operations

Hungry Horse will be operated to avoid spill if practicable. Spill at Hungry Horse is defined as any release through the dam that does not pass through the power plant. Full capacity of the

power plant is around 408 MW (~12,000 cfs) at full pool, however current transmission restrictions limit generation to 310 MW (~9,000 cfs). Large amounts of spill can cause TDG levels in the South Fork of the Flathead River to exceed the state of Montana's standard of 110%. Empirical data and estimates show that limiting spill to a maximum of 15% of total outflow will facilitate operations consistent with the Montana State TDG standard of 110%.

6.3 Albeni Falls Dam

Base metal flaws and defects were identified on a spillway gate undergoing rehabilitation. The flaws were discovered in April 2024 as part of a major gate rehabilitation contract initiated in June 2023. The Albeni Falls spillway gates are original to the dam, constructed in 1955. Since the gates were fabricated at the same time using the same type of steel, the Corps cannot presume that the remaining 10 spillway gates currently in service do not have the same base metal defects and are fit for service. Instead, they are presumed to have the same defects. As a result, reduced movement of spillway gates is needed. We will be coordinating a deviation request that will likely be similar to the deviation we operated under this spring and summer 2024. The purpose of the deviation is to allow the dam to exceed ramping rates, normal summer pool elevation, and changes to spill operations that will impact TDG production until gates can be repaired/replaced. During this time we will try to minimize impacts to our multiple project purposes. Over this winter and spring, the Corps will be evaluating the best approach for a safe and effective spring refill and summer operation. Project updates can be found here:

<https://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Locks-and-Dams/Albeni-Falls-Dam/Spillway-Gate-Replacement-Project/>

6.3.1 Albeni Falls Dam Fall and Winter Operations

At Albeni Falls Dam, the target date to be within six inches of the minimum control elevation (MCE) is November 15. This date is at the request of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to protect kokanee spawning and incubation in Lake Pend Oreille. Depending on hydrologic conditions, Albeni Falls Dam has the flexibility to be within six inches of the MCE by November 20 (2020 CRS BA, page 2-20).

During the fall, Albeni Falls Dam planned target is an MCE of 2051 feet. The lake will stay within a half-foot of the MCE during kokanee spawning. Albeni Falls Dam may be operated to begin implementation of the Flexible Winter Power Operation (FWPO) if requested by BPA as early as after spawning is declared over or December 31, whichever occurs first. Lake Pend Oreille may be fluctuated under FWPO from the MCE to elevation 2056 feet.

6.3.2 FRM Draft

Albeni Falls Dam will be operated during the winter season using standard FRM criteria.

6.3.3 Refill Operations

During the spring, Albeni Falls Dam will be operated to fill Lake Pend Oreille in accordance with standard FRM criteria.

6.3.4 Summer Operations

This section could be revised depending on what new operations study information becomes available and actual basin conditions in Spring of 2026. What follows are typical operations.

During the summer, Albeni Falls Dam will be operated to maintain Lake Pend Oreille elevation at Hope, Idaho, between elevation 2062.0 and 2062.5 feet. The Lake will be held above elevation 2062.0 feet through the third Sunday in September, or September 18, whichever date is later. The Corps will try to keep the water surface elevation above 2061.0 feet through the fourth Sunday in September, or September 25, whichever is later. The latter elevations may change in the event of biological and/or operational needs of the coordinated system. Starting on October 1, the Lake will begin the draft to elevation 2051.0 feet by mid-November.

6.4 Libby Dam

Libby Dam flows will be regulated consistent with existing treaties, Libby Project authorization for public safety, and other laws to provide water volume, and a year-round thermograph that approximates normative conditions as much as possible using the Selective Withdrawal System, while also meeting flood damage reduction objectives. The year-round project minimum outflow is 4.0 kcfs except when flow requirements for bull trout and white sturgeon are in effect. The AAs will continue to coordinate Libby Dam BiOp operations at TMT.

6.4.1 Burbot Spawning Operations

Provide the lowest discharge temperatures available in the reservoir forebay through use of Libby Dam's Selective Withdrawal System to aid burbot migration and spawning in the Kootenai River in Idaho (November through February). An international interagency Memorandum of Understanding Concerning the Kootenai River/Kootenay Lake Burbot Conservation Strategy was completed in June 2005. Use of VARQ FRM procedure and implementation of the variable end-of-December FRM target elevation may increase the effectiveness of this operation in years with below average runoff forecasts (low flows / colder river temperature at Bonners Ferry).

6.4.2 Ramp Rates and Daily Shaping

The purpose of the following actions is to protect resident fish and threatened bull trout habitat by limiting daily and weekly flow fluctuations. Ramping rates protect varial zone productivity by allowing for a more normative rise and fall of the hydrograph, which allows organisms time to migrate as flows change. More restrictive ramping rates for lower discharges are intended to prevent desiccation of established varial zones, thus maintaining productivity; the ramping rates for summer are more restrictive than for winter. The ramping rates for Libby Dam were established in the 2006 USFWS Biological Opinion and remain unchanged in the 2020 USFWS BiOp. The following ramp rates (Table 10) will guide project operations to meet various purposes, including power production.

Daily and hourly ramping rates may be exceeded during flood and power/transmission emergencies to protect health and public safety, and will be coordinated with Libby Dam's

fishery biologist to ensure ecological concerns are addressed related to BiOp compliance. Ramp rates will be followed except when they would cause a unit(s) to operate in the rough zone, a zone of chaotic flow in which all parts of a unit are subject to increased vibration and cavitation that could result in premature wear or failure of the units. In this case, the project will utilize ramping rates which allow all units to operate outside the rough zone.

Table 10: Daily and hourly maximum ramping rates for Libby Dam^a

	Starting Flow	Hourly	Daily
Summer (May 1–September 30)			
Ramp Up	4,000–6,000 cfs	2,500 cfs	1 unit
	6,000–9,000 cfs	2,500 cfs	1 unit
	9,000–16,000 cfs	2,500 cfs	2 units
	16,000 cfs-Q _{PHC} ^b	5,000 cfs	2 units
Ramp Down	4,000–6,000 cfs	500 cfs	500 cfs
	6,000–9,000 cfs	500 cfs	1,000 cfs
	9,000–16,000 cfs	1,000 cfs	2,000 cfs
	16,000 cfs-Q _{PHC} ^b	3,500 cfs	1 unit
Winter (October 1–April 30)			
Ramp Up	4,000–6,000 cfs	2,000 cfs	1 unit
	6,000–9,000 cfs	2,000 cfs	1 unit
	9,000–16,000 cfs	3,500 cfs	2 units
	16,000 cfs-Q _{PHC} ^b	7,000 cfs	2 units
Ramp Down	4,000–6,000 cfs	500 cfs	1,000 cfs
	6,000–9,000 cfs	500 cfs	2,500 cfs
	9,000 –16,000 cfs	1,000 cfs	1 unit
	16,000 cfs-Q _{PHC} ^b	3,500 cfs	1 unit
^a As measured by cumulative daily flow changes within the 24-hour period (mid-night to mid-night, not daily averages), restricted by hourly rates. ^b Q = discharge or flow; PHC = powerhouse capacity.			

(2020 CRS Biological Assessment, page 2-40, Table 2.4)
(2006 USFWS BiOp at Description of the proposed action, page 7, Table 1.)

6.4.3 FRM

The Corps will continue to use its forecast procedure in December to determine the December 31 FRM elevation. The end-of-December elevation is a sliding scale between elevation 2426.7 feet and 2411 feet when the forecast is between 5500 and 5900 KAF. In water years when the December forecast for the period April through August is less than 5900 KAF based on the Corps' forecast procedures, the end-of-December draft elevation will be higher than 2411 feet.

If the December forecast for April-August is 5500 KAF or less, the end-of-December target elevation will be 2426.7 feet.

Libby Dam will be operated during January through March (into April if the start of refill has not been declared) in accordance with the VARQ FRM SRD. During the refill period from about April through June, discharge will be in accordance with VARQ FRM Operating Procedures at Libby Dam. Refill will begin on May 1 for April-August WSFs of less than 6.9 MAF, and will begin on May 1 or 10 days prior to when the forecasted unregulated flow at The Dalles is expected to exceed the ICF, whichever is earlier, for forecasts of 6.9 MAF or above. Double peaking could materialize when the April Libby WSF is greater than the May Libby WSF. Therefore, the initial VARQ flow should use an estimate of the May forecast that limits the chance of needing to decrease flows once the official May forecast is published. This is done so that releases can be steady or increasing prior to the sturgeon operation. Reduction in releases may occur for FRM operations downstream. Once refill begins, Libby Dam outflow will be no lower than the computed VARQ flow (or inflow, if that is lower than the VARQ flow), unless otherwise allowed by the VARQ Operating Procedures. For example, changes to reduce the VARQ flow can occur to protect human life and safety, during the final stages of refill, or through a deviation request.

The VARQ flow will be recalculated with each release of an official Corps WSF, and outflows will be adjusted accordingly. If the VARQ operating procedures require discharges above powerhouse capacity, spill from Libby Dam may occur. The intent is to adjust Libby Dam discharge to maximize reservoir refill probability and minimize the potential for spill.

6.4.4 Spring Operations

The purpose of the following actions is to refill Libby Dam to provide volume for Kootenai River white sturgeon flow augmentation (spring through early summer), bull trout minimum flows (15 May through 30 September), and volume for anadromous fish flow augmentation in the mainstem Columbia River, while attempting to minimize a double peak or large flow fluctuations. The AAs will operate Libby Dam to provide for summer anadromous fish flow augmentation, with the exact reservoir refill date to be determined in-season by available water supply and shape and spring flow operations, while also avoiding involuntary spill and meeting FRM objectives. During the spring, the AAs will operate Libby Dam to meet its flow and refill objectives. If both of these objectives cannot be achieved, VARQ and sturgeon flow operations are a higher priority over summer refill.

When not operating to minimum flows, the project will be operated to achieve a 75% chance of the upper FRM rule curve on or about April 10 (the exact date to be determined during in-season management) to increase flows for spring flow management.

6.4.5 Bull Trout Flows

From May 15 to May 31 and during the month of September, a minimum flow of 6,000 cfs will be discharged. Volume to sustain the basal bull trout minimum flow of 6,000 cfs from May 15 through May 31 will be accounted for with sturgeon volume. The AAs will provide tiered minimum bull trout flows of 6,000-9,000 cfs (based on May WSF) May 31 through August 31,

as determined by Table 11 below. Minimum flows of 4,000 cfs will be provided for the rest of the year.

Table 11. Minimum bull trout releases from Libby Dam after the sturgeon pulse—August 31, based on May final Libby water supply forecast for April–August period. The May 15–May 31 and all of September minimum is 6 kcfs.

Libby Forecast Runoff Volume (MAF*)	Minimum bull trout flows between sturgeon and salmon flows (kcfs)
forecast < 4.80	6 kcfs
4.80 ≤ forecast < 6.00	7 kcfs**
6.00 ≤ forecast < 6.70	8 kcfs
6.70 ≤ forecast	9 kcfs

*MAF = million acre-feet

(This table has been modified from BA Table 2.3 to clarify implementation details, but there are no modifications to the operation that was consulted on with the Services)

** Due to 7 kcfs proximity to rough zone, outflow may be reduced to 6.8 kcfs to protect generating units.

6.4.6 Sturgeon Operation

The purpose of the actions below is to provide water for sturgeon migration, spawning, egg and larval survival, and inundation of off-channel rearing habitats. Libby Dam will provide the tiered volume for sturgeon flows as described in the 2020 CRS BA and 2020 USFWS BiOp, and as summarized in Figure 1. The outflow during sturgeon augmentation period will be equal to or greater than the VARQ flow. The release operation will be developed prior to commencement of the sturgeon tiered flow release. Water temperature profiles in the reservoir forebay are monitored year-round, and along with freshet timing, inform planning and implementing sturgeon flow augmentation operations.

The sturgeon volume is accounted for as volume above the 4,000 cfs minimum discharge from Libby Dam. Commencement and shape of the sturgeon volume discharge is determined by the AA-led Flow Planning Implementation Protocol (FPIP) Technical Team, as described in the 2020 CRS BA, and is coordinated through TMT. Sturgeon volume accounting will also occur when additional flow above FRM flow is needed to sustain a base flow of 6,000 cfs from May 15 to May 31 (minimum bull trout flow), regardless of sturgeon augmentation commencement, as previously described. Sturgeon flows will generally be initiated between mid-May and the end of June to augment lower basin runoff entering the Kootenai River below Libby Dam and Kootenay Lake backwater in the lower river.

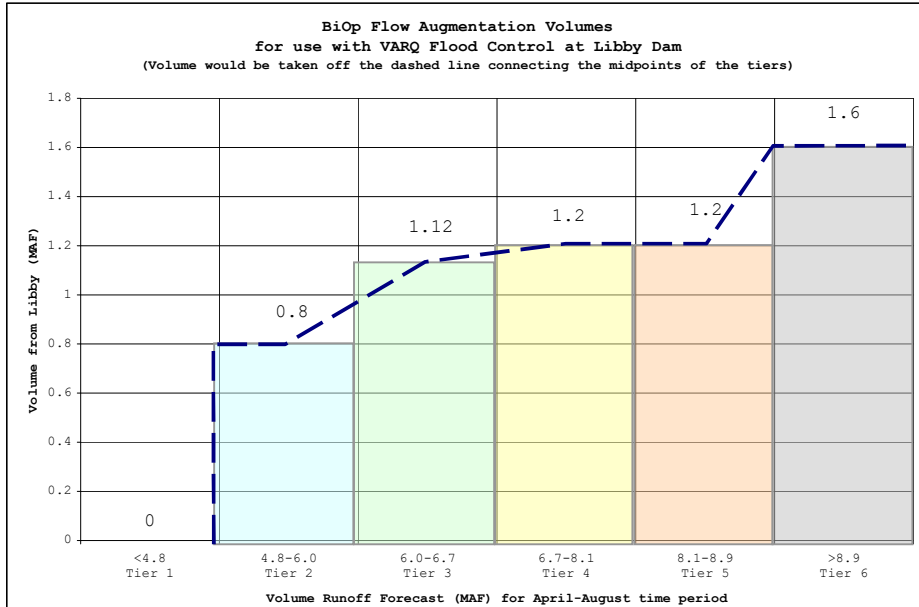


Figure 1. “Tiered” volumes of water for sturgeon flow enhancement to be released from Libby Dam according to the Libby May final forecast of April–August volume. Actual flow releases would be shaped according to seasonal requests from the USFWS and in-season management of available water.

6.4.7 Post-Sturgeon Operation

After the sturgeon operation, flows will be planned to be stable or slowly declining over the summer and to achieve refill, if possible, in late July or early August, while trying to minimize a double peak in outflows. Bull trout minimum flow will be maintained as described in Section 6.4.6. Summer operations will be coordinated through TMT in-season management. Libby Dam releases will follow ramp rates listed in the 2020 CRS BA and as shown in Table 10.

6.4.8 Summer Operations

During the summer, the AAs draft Libby Dam within the specified draft limits in the 2020 CRS BA as previously described based on flow recommendations coordinated at TMT. The AAs consider a number of factors when developing flow recommendations for TMT to review, such as: the impact of flow fluctuations on bull trout and other resident fish below the project, attainment of refill objectives, water quality, and the effects that reservoir operations will have on other listed and resident fish populations in the Kootenai River.

During the months of July through September, the AAs will operate Libby Dam to augment flows for juvenile salmon out-migration in the Columbia River and to help meet local resident fish needs (i.e. shaped flat or gradually receding hydrograph of bull trout minimum flow or

greater to the extent practicable). In the summer, the AAs will operate to target the end of September reservoir elevation designated by the Libby sliding scale (Table 12). However, if the project fails to refill to above these target elevations, then the project will be operated during the summer months to release inflows or to meet minimum flow requirements and minimum bull trout flows.

Table 12. Libby Sliding Scale for End of September Target Elevation. Draft targets are interpolated from this table. August targets are 2.5 feet higher than interpolated September targets.

Libby final May forecast for Apr–Aug inflow (percentile)	Libby final May forecast for Apr–Aug inflow (MAF*)	End of September Lake Koochanusa Elevation Target (ft-NGVD29)*
≤ 15 th percentile	4.48	2439
25 th percentile	5.08	2449
75 th percentile	7.06	2449
≥85 th percentile	7.53	2454

*MAF = million acre-feet. Values here based on the current official 30-year period of 1991 to 2020.

**Targets are interpolated between 15th and 25th percentile, and between 75th and 85th percentile.

The Corps will use the best available forecast at the end of each month for July and August to set an outflow that will gradually draft Libby to the target elevation by the end of September as defined in the 2020 CRS BA. The objective of this operation is to maintain a stable or gradually declining outflow for the period from July through September. If this calculated flow is greater than the bull trout minimum, then the discharge will be maintained until updated as needed.

The following limits to flow fluctuation during summer and fall at Libby Dam shall be implemented after the tiered flow volume for Kootenai River White Sturgeon has been released while targeting end-of-September Koochanusa Reservoir elevation for salmon flow augmentation:

- Outflows at or below 9 kcfs
 - Maintain existing instream flow requirement for bull trout. Minimize fluctuation.
- Flows between 9 kcfs and 16 kcfs
 - Maximum increase of 2000 cfs (corresponds to daily maximum ramp down rate for this period).
- Flows between 16 kcfs and powerhouse capacity
 - Maximum increase of 5000 cfs
 - or one unit (corresponds to daily maximum ramp down rate for this period)

6.4.9 KTOI Twin Rivers Sturgeon Hatchery Intake Icing

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI) Twin Rivers hatchery is located downstream of Libby Dam. The hatchery raises ESA listed Kootenai River White Sturgeon and Burbot (an unlisted freshwater cod) year-round. Water for the hatchery is drawn from the Kootenai River during the

winter. In the winter, both when discharge from Libby Dam is at 4 kcfs (the minimum flow for bull trout) and during periods of very cold conditions, the tributaries can freeze and drop water levels in the river. These conditions expose the intake making it susceptible to ice formation and flow constriction which can block water from entering the hatchery. When these conditions occur, KTOI may request increased discharge from Libby Dam up to 6 kcfs to prevent ice formation on the hatchery intake. Libby discharge will return to the minimum flow (4 kcfs) as soon as the weather and the instream conditions change. Typically, these conditions may occur between mid-January and mid-March and can last a week.

6.5 Grand Coulee Dam

Grand Coulee Dam is operated for multiple purposes including fish and wildlife, FRM, irrigation, hydropower generation, and recreation. Specific operations for flow management to aid anadromous and resident fish are listed in the following sections.

6.5.1 Winter/Spring Operations

Grand Coulee will be operated for FRM from January through the start of refill with the FRM draft being guided by the Grand Coulee SRD as coordinated through in-season adaptive management between the Corps and Reclamation. Grand Coulee is also operated during this period to support Hanford Reach flows, chum incubation below Bonneville Dam (described in detail in Section 7.3) and to maintain an 85% probability of reaching the April 10 elevation objective to provide more water for spring flows.

Maintaining an 85% probability of reaching the April 10 elevation objective is achieved by operating between the FRM elevation as an upper elevation limit and the VDL as a lower elevation limit for the reservoir from January through March. A description of VDL is provided in Section 7.4.

Reclamation computes Grand Coulee Dam's April 10 elevation objective by linear interpolation between the March 31 and April 15 forecasted FRM elevations based on the NWRFC March Final April-August WSF at The Dalles. The March forecast is chosen for the calculation of the April 10 elevation objective in order to allow enough time to react and to plan Grand Coulee operations accordingly. The April final forecast is typically released on the 3rd working day of the month, after which the Corps calculates FRM elevations. This usually means that final April 15 and April 30 FRM elevations are released around the 5th working day of April at the earliest. It is notable that even modest changes in The Dalles water supply forecast can produce significant changes in the forecasted FRM elevations for Grand Coulee. In order to achieve final April FRM targets, actual Grand Coulee elevations on April 10 may be below or above the April 10 objective depending on draft rates and water supply conditions and will be coordinated in-season.

The calculation of the VDL, described above, will use the April 10 date for the calculation but the timing to reach this objective during the month of April will be coordinated in-season with TMT. April 10 will be the default target date but operations for FRM, balancing fishery needs, and power operations may necessitate being above or below the target with coordination with TMT.

An additional factor that needs to be considered during spring operations is the available powerhouse capacity at Grand Coulee. The Washington Power Plant (WPP) overhaul first phase (3 units) was completed in 2021, this activity has increased the reliable operation of these units. The second phase on the three remaining units is anticipated to start in 2030. Unit outages for routine scheduled maintenance and longer outages for the overhaul of units or unscheduled outages may significantly reduce powerhouse discharge capacity. Every effort is made to schedule annual and other routine maintenance outside of the “normal” spring FRM/refill period when possible but heavy runoff years, early or delayed runoff timing, and/or unscheduled maintenance will increase the probability of spill and excessive TDG production. Adaptive management operations at Grand Coulee may need to be considered during these situations to minimize spill and TDG production. Grand Coulee operations will be discussed and coordinated with the TMT.

Opportunities to shift system FRM requirements from Brownlee and/or Dworshak to Grand Coulee will also be considered and will be coordinated between the Corps and Reclamation. FRM elevations including FRM shifts may be found on the following website:
https://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/report/flood_risk/

The shift allows operators to draft the Grand Coulee more deeply in the winter to keep the Brownlee and Dworshak reservoirs at higher levels. The reservoirs must meet their specific FRM elevation requirements by April 30. Refill at Grand Coulee normally begins approximately one day prior to when streamflow forecasts of unregulated flow is projected to exceed the ICF at The Dalles Dam.

During the spring, the AAs will operate the CRS to help meet the flow objectives, to meet system FRM requirements and to refill the projects. If all of the objectives cannot be achieved, the TMT will make an in-season recommendation, weighing considerations unique to each particular year and project. System FRM requirements during refill, especially during above average years, may result in significant spill below Grand Coulee Dam to control refill, meet downstream FRM flow objectives, and limit downstream flooding. High levels of spill below Grand Coulee result in high TDG levels. A more detailed discussion of spill operations is discussed in Section 6.5.9.

6.5.2 Summer Operations

Grand Coulee will operate to refill after the Independence Day (4th of July) holiday each year to provide summer flow augmentation, except as specifically provided by the TMT. Grand Coulee will draft to support salmon flow objectives during July-August with variable draft limit of 1280 to 1278 feet by August 31 based on the WSF. If the July Final April through August forecast for The Dalles is equal to or greater than the 30-year average volume (currently 89 MAF) then Lake Roosevelt’s summer draft target will be to 1280 feet (10 feet from full). If the forecast is less than the 30-year average volume, the draft target will be to 1278 feet (12 feet from full). These draft targets will be modified to implement the Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project (see Section 6.5.6).

6.5.3 Banks Lake Summer Operation

Banks Lake will draft to elevation 1565 feet, or lower, by the end of August to provide more water for summer flow augmentation. Pumping to Banks Lake will be reduced and irrigation for the Columbia Basin Project will be met by drafting the reservoir up to 5 feet from full (elevation 1570 feet) by the end of August. In addition to the 5-foot draft, Banks Lake will draft for the Odessa Subarea Partial Groundwater Replacement Project. The Odessa Subarea Partial Groundwater Replacement Project was consulted on in 2013, implementation timing is dependent on funding, construction, and other factors. As this project is implemented the Banks Lake draft will incrementally increase during the summer to deliver groundwater replacement water while reducing impacts to Columbia River flows.

6.5.4 Project Maintenance

The eleven spillway drum gates are an extremely important dam safety feature and must be maintained. Drum gate maintenance is planned to occur annually during March, April, and May. To perform maintenance the reservoir must be at or below elevation 1255 feet for 8 weeks in order to complete a drum gate maintenance cycle.

The in-season criteria to determine if drum gate maintenance will be accomplished is based on the forecasted April 30 FRM maximum Grand Coulee elevation as determined by the February final April-August WSF. The February forecast is used to allow sufficient time to draft the reservoir below 1255 feet by March 15. These criteria are summarized in Table 13 and described in greater detail below. At a minimum, drum gate maintenance must be completed at least one time in a 3-year period, two times in a 5-year period, and three times in a 7-year period.

If the February forecast results in a Grand Coulee April 30 FRM elevation at or below 1255 feet, Grand Coulee will be drafted to perform drum gate maintenance. If the forecasted April 30 FRM elevation is greater than elevation 1255 and the minimum maintenance interval criteria is satisfied, maintenance in that year can be deferred. When the February forecast sets the April 30 FRM requirement above 1265 feet, drum gate maintenance will be “forced” only if needed to meet the minimum maintenance interval of the 1 in 3, 2 in 5, and 3 in 7 years criteria. If the April 30 FRM requirement is between 1255 and 1265 feet, then maintenance will only be done if the following year would be a “forced” drum gate maintenance year. For example, if maintenance is deferred in year “one” due to dry conditions and the forecasted FRM elevation is between 1255 feet and 1265 feet in year “two”, then drum gate maintenance would be accomplished in year “two” in order to avoid “forced” drum gate maintenance in year “three” regardless of water supply conditions. The example above illustrates the 1 in 3 criteria but the 2 in 5 and 3 in 7 criteria would also need to be checked.

Table 13. Grand Coulee Dam Criteria for Drum Gate Maintenance.

February FRM Requirement for Maximum April 30 GCL Elevation (feet)	Drum Gate Maintenance ¹
--	------------------------------------

≤ 1255 feet	YES
1255 – 1265 feet	If following year would be a “forced” drum gate maintenance year: Yes If following year would not be a “forced” drum gate maintenance year: No
> 1265 feet	If in “forced” drum gate maintenance year: Yes If not in “forced” drum gate maintenance year: No

1. Drum Gate Maintenance is required to meet the 1 in 3, 2 in 5, and 3 in 7 years criteria

Drum gate maintenance was completed in the spring of 2017, 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2023 but was not accomplished in 2024 and 2025. Based on the 1 in 3 criteria, drum gate maintenance is required in 2026.

In addition to the annual Drum Gate Maintenance, an inspection and maintenance activity is planned for the 57” Butterfly Drum Gate Intake Valves. Some inspection and maintenance on these valves can occur regardless of water levels, but other maintenance requires water levels at or below 1219 feet. The external inspection and maintenance requires water levels at or below 1219 feet, for up to 10 days, with a goal to occur once every ten years. Inspection of the valves is expected to take advantage of spring drafts for FRM. If valves require maintenance and repairs, the work may require an additional draft below FRM requirements to conduct this maintenance. This could result in additional outflow, a longer duration of ferry outage, and elevated spill and TDG. The decision to inspect the valves will be an in-season decision depending on if the project is required to draft to elevation 1,222 feet, the timing of FRM refill requirements, and if the project can reasonably draft without violating TDG requirements.

6.5.5 Fall Refill

Reclamation attempts to operate Grand Coulee Dam and Lake Roosevelt to refill to an elevation of 1,283 feet by September 30 at the request of tribes to aid resident fish, including access to shoreline and tributary habitat. To maintain power generation flexibility, the Lake Roosevelt elevation objective of 1,283 feet or higher by the end of September may be delayed to no later than the end of October. Delaying refilling to an elevation of 1,283 feet allows more operational flexibility for hydropower generation by relaxing restrictions on seasonal pool elevations at Grand Coulee Dam. In most years, meeting the targeted elevation of 1,283 feet by the end of September is anticipated, but in drier years when the summer flow augmentation objective is 1,278 feet (at the end of August) refilling to 1,283 feet affects hydropower generational flexibility. In these years, the requirement is not until the end of October, but the project will be operated to refill to an elevation of 1,283 feet as soon as practical.

6.5.6 Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project

The Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project is a component of the Columbia River Water Management Program (CRWMP) and is intended to improve municipal and industrial water supply, provide water to replace some ground water use in the Odessa Subarea, enhance stream flows in the Columbia River to benefit fish, and to provide water to interruptible water right holders in drought years. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project was signed by the State of Washington, Reclamation, and the Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts in December 2004. In December 2007,

Water Resource Management Agreements in support of the incremental storage releases from Lake Roosevelt were signed by the State of Washington, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Spokane Tribe of Indians.

The Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project will not reduce flows during the salmon flow objective period (April - August). A third of this water will go to in-stream flows. A more detailed description of this item is provided in Section 7.5 and in the 2020 CRS BA (page 2-45).

6.5.7 Chum Flows

Grand Coulee may be used to help meet tailwater elevations below Bonneville Dam to support chum spawning and incubation. The chum operation is described in more detail in Section 7.3.

6.5.8 Priest Rapids Flow Objective

Grand Coulee will be operated to help meet the flow objective at Priest Rapids Dam as coordinated with the TMT (see Section 6.7 for objectives).

6.5.9 Spill Operations

Forced spill at Grand Coulee, as the result of system FRM requirements, may result in high levels of TDG below Grand Coulee Dam. There will be times that Grand Coulee has to spill any required discharge that is in excess of power plant capacity to control refill, meet downstream FRM flow objectives, and to limit downstream flooding. If Lake Roosevelt is above elevation 1265.5 feet, Grand Coulee can spill water over the drum gates. However, if Lake Roosevelt is below elevation 1265.5 feet, then all spill must be through the outlet tubes which can result in high levels of TDG below the project. Another factor that can cause elevated TDG levels downstream of the dam is elevated TDG levels in the forebay resulting from high TDG levels coming into Lake Roosevelt from Canada. High TDG levels resulting from outlet tube spill and/or from high forebay TDG generally affects the river reach between Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams and beyond. The spillway flow deflectors at Chief Joseph Dam are very efficient at stripping TDG and reducing TDG traveling further downstream when operating. During forced spill events, Grand Coulee will be operated to minimize TDG production to the extent practicable. Involuntary spill at Grand Coulee Dam will be managed in coordination with Chief Joseph Dam operations.

6.6 Chief Joseph Dam

Chief Joseph will spill according to the spill priority list and TDG production estimates to assist in systemwide TDG management.

6.7 Middle Columbia Projects

6.7.1 Priest Rapids Spring Operations

The spring flow objective at Priest Rapids Dam is 135 kcfs from April 10 to June 30.

6.7.2 Hanford Reach Protection Flows

Grant County PUD manages the discharge from Priest Rapids Dam at the following intervals during the year to provide protection for the spawning, incubation and rearing of fall Chinook salmon.

- October-November, reverse loading (low flows during daylight hours, spill excess at night) to reduce the formation of redds at high river elevations on Vernita Bar
- November-May, maintain "Critical Elevation" in the Hanford Reach (minimum flow restriction to prevent dewatering of redds)
- March-June, reduce daily flow fluctuations to decrease mortality to juvenile fall Chinook from stranding and entrapment

6.7.3 Flood Risk Management

The middle Columbia projects are generally operated as run-of-river projects but Wells, Rocky Reach, and Priest Rapids/Wanapum have FRM space requirements that may be utilized. This FRM space, when utilized, is beneficial for regulating floods for the lower Columbia River. Wells and Rocky Reach have FRM requirements that are triggered when the forecasted, regulated peak inflow to The Dalles exceeds 500,000 cfs, and Priest Rapids/Wanapum has a FRM requirement when the forecasted, regulated peak inflow to Priest Rapids exceeds 250,000 cfs. The potential FRM space from these projects is estimated beginning early in the FRM evacuation period but the drafting of FRM space, when it occurs, is not expected to start until after April 1. Drafting these projects will be delayed as long as possible. It is estimated that FRM space from the middle Columbia projects would be available by the Initiation of FRM Fill, with specific timing being determined in-season based on real-time modeling to prevent induced flooding in the Lower Columbia by drafting too quickly.

6.8 Dworshak Dam

Specific Dworshak Dam operations are described below in a seasonal format. The Corps and Bonneville will refrain from within-day load shaping at Dworshak Dam as occurred during January 2021 unless necessary for equipment testing or other operation and maintenance related activities.

6.8.1 Ramp Rates and Daily Shaping

Ramp rates and limitations described in this section are an addition to criteria set forth in other Corps operative documents and do not violate the one foot per hour overall ramping rate as it is measured at the USGS gage at Peck.

The purpose of the ramp rates defined below (Table 14) is to provide better conditions for rearing and holding fish by limiting flow fluctuations within the river system. Ramp rates help by emulating a normative hydrograph. The ramp rates for Dworshak Dam were developed with

consideration to downstream fisheries, minimizing impacts to fish habitat, and supporting angler safety. The following ramp rates will guide the project during normal operations to the extent possible.

Daily ramp rates may be exceeded during flood emergencies to protect health and public safety, unit testing, life safety emergencies at the dam or downstream, and in association with power or transmission emergencies. At the project, the ramp rates will be followed except when they would cause a unit(s) to operate in the rough zone, a zone of chaotic flow in which all parts of the unit are subject to increased vibration and cavitation that could result in premature wear or failure of the units. In this case, the project will utilize a ramp rate which allows all units to operate outside of the rough zone.

Table 14. Dworshak Dam Ramp Rates.

USGS Gage-Clearwater River at Orofino (ORFI) Flow ^a		Daily
Ramp Up	0-10,000 cfs	2,000 cfs
	10,000-20,000 cfs	2,700 cfs
	20,000-30,000 cfs	5,100 cfs
	30,000-40,000 cfs	8,000 cfs
	40,000-50,000 cfs	8,900 cfs
	50,000-60,000 cfs	10,800 cfs
	60,000-70,000 cfs	15,800 cfs
	70,000-80,000 cfs	14,100 cfs
Ramp Down	0-10,000 cfs	2,000 cfs
	10,000-20,000 cfs	2,000 cfs
	20,000-30,000 cfs	2,800 cfs
	30,000-40,000 cfs	4,900 cfs
	40,000-50,000 cfs	6,600 cfs
	50,000-60,000 cfs	8,900 cfs
	60,000-70,000 cfs	13,600 cfs
	70,000-80,000 cfs	14,000 cfs
	80,000-90,000 cfs	15,400 cfs
^a adhered to as closely as possible within a margin of error		

Flow changes within the day will follow the following guidelines:

- Ramp Up
 - Flow changes will take place between 7:00 PM-11:00 PM.

- The total flow change for the day will be evenly divided over evening hours or in 500 cfs increments.*
- Ramp Down
 - Flow changes will take place over the entire 24-hour period.
 - Flow increments throughout the day are made in evenly divided increments at a minimum of 500 cfs, spaced throughout the 24-hour period.*

*Due to physical limitations of the project 500 cfs is the minimum increment that changes need to be made when using the powerhouse or the regulating outlets. If the spillway gates are in use then 1,000 cfs is the minimum increment.

For release changes that occur below elevation 1,552 feet the powerhouse capacity is used first to minimize TDG, if additional outflow is needed then the regulating outlets are used. Once the forebay elevation is above elevation 1,552 feet there is enough head to allow the spillway gates to be used. Compared to the regulating outlets the spillway gates produce less TDG for the same amount of flow but require a 1,000 cfs incremental change due to physical constraints of the gates. In an effort to minimize TDG during high flow events, which typically coincide with spring fish migration, the powerhouse capacity will be used first, then the spillway gates. In the event the spillway gates are out of service, then the regulating outlets will be used.

6.8.2 Winter/Spring Operations

Winter flow releases from Dworshak will be made to meet end of month FRM targets based on the NWRFC 10-day ESP median forecast. ~~From the period of January 1 to March 31, slightly deeper reservoir drafts will be calculated in-season to improve FRM operations, reduce spring spill at Dworshak Dam, and increase hydropower generation consistent with meeting a 95% refill probability by about June 30 and no lower than the in-season projected March 31 FRM elevation.~~ The spring flow operation is to maintain a 95% probability of refilling Dworshak while also providing a minimum of 125 KAF of additional releases above the minimum flow of 1.6 kcfs of stored water from Dworshak reservoir in order to maximize the chance of meeting the lower Snake River spring flow objectives and aid out-migrating salmon and steelhead.

During the spring, the AAs will operate Dworshak Dam to improve the probability of meeting the flow and refill objectives, refilling by about June 30, or earlier in dry years (exact date to be determined during in-season management) (2020 CRS BA, page 2-29). The reservoir is deemed to be “full” at elevations of 1599 feet or above. If both these objectives cannot be achieved, the TMT will make an in-season recommendation, weighing considerations unique to each particular year. Opportunities to shift system FRM requirements from Dworshak to Grand Coulee will be considered periodically from January through April. Shift of system space will not occur in high water years (with a Dworshak WSF greater than 3.0 MAF April to July runoff). In coordination with the TMT, the Corps may adjust project outflows, if necessary, in order to move juvenile fish into the mainstem Clearwater River during the spring hatchery releases.

6.8.3 Summer Operations

Summer flow augmentation is provided from Dworshak to increase fish survival by moderating river temperatures (improved water quality) and increasing flows in the lower Snake River. The summer temperature moderation and flow augmentation releases from Dworshak will be shaped with the primary intent to maintain water temperatures at the Lower Granite tailrace fixed monitoring site at or below 68°F. The Corps maintains and operates a water quality analysis model (CE-QUAL-W2), which is used in-season to forecast downstream water temperatures and inform Dworshak release decisions. The model extends from Dworshak (Clearwater River) and Hells Canyon (Snake River) dams downstream through Lower Granite Dam. Dworshak releases generally are sufficient to provide effective water temperature management in the Lower Granite tailrace but these efforts can be overwhelmed by extremely hot weather, high discharges of warm water from Hells Canyon Dam, changes in spill operations, or high wind events that disrupt (due to mixing) the thermal stratification in the Lower Granite reservoir.

During the summer (June through September) the AAs will operate Dworshak to help meet the primary flow/temperature objectives as stated above in coordination with the TMT. In addition, the AAs will take into consideration the operating criteria for the Lower Granite Dam Adult Fish Facility as outlined in FPP Appendix G to maintain ladder water temperature <70°F as environmental conditions and water availability allow. The AAs plan to draft no lower than 1535 feet by the end of August, and draft to 1520 feet (80 feet from full) by the end of September unless modified per the Agreement between the United States and the Nez Perce Tribe (Dworshak Board Operational Plan) for water use in the Dworshak Reservoir.

The extension of the draft limit into September assures that water will be released consistent with the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) Agreement. Releases under the NPT Agreement will be determined in the annual plan prepared by the Nez Perce Tribe, Corps, NMFS, Idaho, and BPA, and presented to the TMT for implementation.

6.8.4 Fall Operations

After summer fish operations are completed (including the NPT Agreement operations in September), flows from Dworshak will be limited to minimum discharge (one small turbine operating above the cavitation zone and within 110% TDG, approximately 1600 cfs) unless higher flows are required for FRM, emergencies, or other project uses. The purpose of these actions is to manage the filling of Dworshak reservoir while operating the project for multiple uses. Flows from Dworshak also may be maintained above minimum flow if Corps analysis determines there is flexibility to release a volume of water above minimum flow and still maintain a 95% reliability of meeting spring refill objectives.

6.8.5 Project Maintenance

As described in the FPP (see Appendix I), the annual maintenance period is September 15 through the end of February. Special procedures developed to avoid fish impacts during unit testing and start-up will be followed in accordance with the FPP (see Appendix I). Changes to the dates associated with project maintenance will be coordinated with the FPOM via the FPP change form process.

6.9 Brownlee Dam

Opportunities to shift system FRM requirements from Brownlee to Grand Coulee will be considered. See section 4.5 on FRM Shifts for more details. The shifts could occur from January through April. The reservoirs need to be back to their specific FRM requirements by April 30. The purpose of this shift is to allow Brownlee to be at higher elevations to improve the probability for increased spring flows in the Snake River. These shifts may be implemented after coordination with the Corps, Reclamation, and BPA.

6.10 Lower Snake River Dams (Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, Ice Harbor)

6.10.1 Reservoir Operations

The four lower Snake River CRS projects (Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, and Ice Harbor) are operated for multiple purposes including fish and wildlife conservation, irrigation, navigation, hydropower generation, recreation, and limited FRM. ~~The Corps shall operate Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, and Ice Harbor Dams at minimum operating pool (MOP) with a 1.0 foot forebay operating range and a 0.5 foot range to the extent possible (referred to operationally as a “soft constraint”) from March 1 until September 30, 2026, unless adjusted on occasion to meet authorized project purposes, primarily navigation, as specified in the FOP (e.g., 2024 FOP Section 4.6). Minimum operating pool (MOP) operations will be described in the forthcoming 2026 FOP.~~

The Corps conducts a bathymetric survey of the federal navigation channel annually to assure a 14 foot depth is maintained in the federal navigation channel. ~~Bathymetric surveys performed from 2017-2022 showed impairment of the federal navigation channel in the Lower Granite pool. As a result, the Corps implemented a variable MOP operation at Lower Granite from 2018-2022 to help maintain a minimum depth of 14 feet in the federal navigation channel.~~ Dredging of the federal navigation channel was completed in February 2023 to remove the sediment and allow Lower Granite to operate throughout its normal forebay range. In 2023, with the federal navigation channel restored, Lower Granite operated in the normal MOP range (733.0-734.5 feet) from April 3 until August 31. ~~Lower Granite MOP operations will be described in the 2026 FOP.~~

6.10.2 Snake River Zero Generation

Zero Generation Operations as described in the 2020 CRSO EIS ROD will no longer commence as early as October 15, and will instead commence once the previously defined implementation trigger of “few, if any” actively migrating anadromous fish (as described in SOR 2005-22) has been met. This trigger will be implemented in relation to both date (implementation will be limited to periods between December 1 and through February 28) and abundance.

Salmon Managers submitted System Operations Request (SOR) 2005-22 Snake River Zero Nighttime and Weekend Flow, to the Action Agencies (AA) on December 6, 2005. The SOR may be found on the following website:

<http://pweb.crohms.org/tmt/sor/2005/2005-22.pdf>

In the SOR, the Salmon Managers provided the AAs with the following table to define the criteria of “... few, if any ...” prior to the implementation of the Zero Generation Operation. The few migrating adult criterion trigger will be defined on a sliding scale outlined in the following table. The table applies to both “wild” and “total” categories of returning adult steelhead.

Table 15: The Few Migrating Adult Criterion Trigger (SOR 2005-22)

Run to date>#	Run to date<#	Few criteria<#
0	30,000	10
30,000	60,000	20
60,000	100,000	35
100,000	150,000	50
150,000	200,000	65
200,000	250,000	80
250,000		100

System Operations Request 2005-22 defined “few” migrating adults; this SOR has guided operations through 2019. Over time, these criteria have been slightly modified to include:

1. The number of adults migrating per day is defined as the number of upstream counts minus the number of downstream counts, as reported on the Fish Passage Center’s website (https://www.fpc.org/currentdaily/HistFishTwo_7day-ytd_Adults.htm).
2. A three-day moving average will be used to determine if the few migrating adult criterion has been met.
3. The criteria apply to both “Unclipped” and “total” categories of returning adult steelhead. “Unclipped” and “total” returns will be calculated separately. Only one of the categories is necessary to show that more than a few adults are migrating.
4. The run to date is defined as the cumulative number of adult steelhead in the “Unclipped” and “total” categories passing Lower Granite Dam since July 1st of the return year.

During the period between the date the criteria above is met and end of February discharge at the four lower Snake River CRS projects may be reduced discharge to the project minimum discharge. The reduction in discharge is limited to the nighttime hours identified below. The utilization of this flexibility will be consistent with the historical use of the operation during the months of December through February.

The timing of “*nighttime*” and “*dawn*” changes throughout the year. Based on the hours of actual Civil Twilight at Lower Granite Dam, the following hour ranges were coordinated during the October 21, 2020, TMT meeting to be consistent with the criteria identified in the 2020 CRS BA:

DATES	“NIGHTTIME” HOURS FOR ZERO GEN
December 1-14	1800-0600
December 15 - January 31	1800-0600 + up to 3 daytime hours

February 1-28 1900-0600 + up to 3 daytime hours

Sources for definitions and computation of nighttime hours:

<https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/grad/solcalc/glossary.html>

<https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/grad/solcalc/calcdetails.html>

6.10.3 Lower Granite Dam Flow Objectives

6.10.3.1 Spring Flow Objectives

The April final runoff volume forecast at Lower Granite Dam for April to July determines the spring flow objective at Lower Granite Dam. When the forecast is less than 16 MAF, the flow objective will be 85 kcfs. If the forecast is between 16 and 20 MAF, the flow objective will be linearly interpolated between 85 and 100 kcfs. If the forecast is greater than 20 MAF, the flow objective will be 100 kcfs. The flow objective is measured as the season average of the discharge at Lower Granite between the planning dates of April 3 to June 20. These flow objectives are provided as a biological guideline and will likely not be met throughout the entire migration season in all years because the flow in the Snake River primarily depends on the volume and shape of the natural runoff, while the augmentation volumes available are small in comparison to the overall objective. Flow in the Snake River during this period is supported by drafting Dworshak Dam and by flow augmentation water from the upper Snake River.

6.10.3.2 Summer Flow Objectives

The June final runoff volume forecast at Lower Granite Dam for April to July determines the summer flow objective at Lower Granite Dam. When the forecast is less than 16 MAF, the flow objective will be 50 kcfs. If the forecast is between 16 and 28 MAF, the flow objective will be linearly interpolated between 50 and 55 kcfs. If the forecast is greater than 28 MAF, the flow objective will be 55 kcfs. The summer flow objective is measured as the season average of the discharge at Lower Granite between the planning dates of June 21 to August 31. The summer flow in the Snake River is augmented by the release of stored water upstream of Lower Granite Dam. The summer flow objectives are provided as a biological guideline and will likely not be met throughout the entire migration season in all years because there is a limited amount of stored water available for flow augmentation and the natural shape of the runoff generally produces decreasing streamflow from July to the end of August.

6.11 Lower Columbia River Dams (McNary, John Day, The Dalles, Bonneville)

6.11.1 Reservoir Operations

The four lower Columbia River CRS projects (McNary, John Day, The Dalles, and Bonneville) are operated for multiple purposes including fish and wildlife, irrigation, navigation, hydropower generation, recreation, and limited FRM. The AAs will operate the lower Columbia River reservoirs within their normal operating ranges. Additional information regarding turbine operations ($\pm 1\%$ from peak efficiency), and spill operations, may be found in the most current

Fish Operations Plan and Fish Passage Plan. John Day FRM operations are described below in section 6.11.1.4.

6.11.1.1 Tribal Treaty Fishing

To accommodate tribal treaty fishing in the lower Columbia River, the AAs will operate The Dalles and Bonneville Dams within a 1.5-foot range and John Day Dam within a 2.0 foot operating range during tribal fishing seasons.

6.11.1.2 Blalock Island Operation

As described in the 2020 CRS BA (page 2-57), from April 10 – June 1 (or as feasible based on river flows), the John Day reservoir elevation will be held between 264.5 feet and 266.5 feet (an average of 265.5 feet) to deter Caspian terns from nesting in the Blalock Islands Complex. The AAs intend to begin increasing the forebay elevation prior to initiation of nesting by Caspian terns to avoid take of tern eggs; operations may begin earlier than April 10 (when the reservoir is typically operated between 262.5 to 266.5 feet). The operation may be adaptively managed due to changing run timing; however, the intent of the operation is to begin returning to reservoir elevations of 262.5–264.5 feet on June 1, but no later than June 15, which generally captures 95% of the annual juvenile steelhead migration. The results of this action would be monitored and communicated with USFWS and NMFS. During the operation, safety-related restrictions would continue, including but not limited to maintaining ramp rates for minimizing project erosion, FRM, and maintaining power grid reliability. Following this operation, the John Day reservoir elevation will return to MIP through August 31.

6.11.1.3 John Day Dam Minimum Irrigation Pool (MIP)

From approximately June 1 (no later than June 15) through August 31, John Day Dam will be operated to minimize water travel time for downstream-migrating juvenile salmon by operating the forebay within the minimum irrigation pool (MIP) range of 262.5 to 264.5 feet, which is the lowest pool elevation that allows irrigation withdrawals.

6.11.1.4 John Day Dam Flood Risk Management

Approximately 500 kaf of FRM space at John Day is available between elevation 257.0 ft to 268.0 ft. John Day is generally operated as a run-of-river project but does have this FRM space that may be exercised. The total FRM space at John Day can be requested regardless of The Dalles forecast if it is anticipated that Grand Coulee cannot make up for the total system FRM deficit using its adjustment procedure. Although the need for FRM space at John Day may be estimated beginning early in the FRM evacuation period, the space is intended to be used to accomplish the final regulation of floods for the lower Columbia River at the downstream control point on the Columbia River at Vancouver, Washington, so the drafting of John Day to meet its FRM requirement is not expected to start until after April 1. It is estimated that the FRM space at John Day would be available by the Initiation of FRM Fill, with specific timing being determined in-season based on real-time modeling to prevent induced flooding in the Lower Columbia by drafting the project too quickly.

Commented [JH6]: Details are needed on how John Day pool elevation lowering for FRM required space would be implemented. When and how fast the pool is lowered and how it would be filled needs to be discussed and coordinated with fish managers. Planning and discussions should explore proactively operating John Day at MOP for FRM management and juvenile travel time benefits.

6.11.2 McNary Dam Flow Objectives

6.11.2.1 Spring Flow Objectives

The spring flow objective at McNary Dam is set according to the April final runoff volume forecast at The Dalles Dam for April to August. When the forecast is less than 80 MAF the flow objective will be 220 kcfs. If the forecast is between 80 MAF and 92 MAF the flow objective will be linearly interpolated between 220 kcfs and 260 kcfs. If the forecast is greater than 92 MAF the flow objective will be 260 kcfs. The spring flow objective is measured as the season average discharge at McNary Dam between the planning dates of April 10 to June 30. The flow objective is provided as a biological guideline and will not be met throughout the migration season in all years due to variability in volume and shape of the natural runoff.

6.11.2.2 Summer Flow Objectives

The summer flow objective at McNary Dam is 200 kcfs. The summer flow objective is measured as the season average of the discharge at McNary Dam between the planning dates of July 1 to August 31. The flow in the summer at McNary is augmented by the release of stored water upstream of McNary Dam. The summer flow objective cannot be met in all years as there is a limited amount of stored water available for flow augmentation and the natural shape of the runoff generally produces decreasing streamflows from July to the end of August.

6.11.2.3 Weekend Flows

Weekend flows are often lower than weekday flows due to less electrical load demand in the region. During the spring and summer migration period (April through August), the AAs will strive to maintain McNary flows during the weekend at a level which is at least 80% of the previous weekday average.

6.11.3 Chum Operation

See section 7.3 for a detailed discussion on the chum operation.

7. Specific Operations

7.1 Canadian Storage for Flow Augmentation

7.1.1 Columbia River Treaty (Treaty) Storage

U.S. and Canadian entities can prepare and implement supplemental operating agreements. These supplemental operating agreements must be mutually agreed upon and provide benefits for both entities. One such agreement that has been negotiated and developed each year for the past approximately 30 years is the annual Non-Power Uses Agreement.

The U.S. Section of the Columbia River Treaty Operating Committee (CRTOC) will seek a Non-Power Uses Agreement with Canada for water year 2026 that will allow storage of 1 MAF of water in Canadian Treaty space for release during the migration season for the benefit of U.S.

fisheries. Annual agreements between the U.S. and Canadian entities to provide flow augmentation storage in Canada for U.S. fisheries will seek to include provisions that allow flexibility for the release of any stored water to provide U.S. fisheries benefits to the extent possible by:

- Providing the greatest flexibility possible for releasing water to benefit U.S. fisheries April through July;
- Giving preference to meeting April 10 elevation objectives or achieving refill at Grand Coulee Dam over flow augmentation storage in Canada in lower water supply conditions; and
- Releasing flow augmentation storage to avoid causing damaging flow or excessive TDG in the U.S. or Canada.

The traditional Non-Power Uses Agreement is designed to provide non-power benefits in the U.S. (1 MAF of flow augmentation water stored in Canada) in exchange for non-power benefits in Canada (whitefish (Section 6.1.1) and trout (Section 6.1.2)). Each year discussions typically begin in the fall with Canada on a Non-Power Uses Agreement for the storage and release of the 1 MAF of flow augmentation. Canadian objectives for whitefish and trout protection will be determined by BC Hydro in consultation with Canadian regulators.

In-season management under the Non-Power Uses Agreement is coordinated on a continuing basis by the Operating Committee to try to meet the objectives of both countries and may require mutual agreement.

In addition to the Non-Power Uses Agreement, other supplemental operating agreements may be in place or may be developed during the operating year. Historically, those agreements are developed and implemented in accordance with their terms so as to not reduce the benefits of the Non-Power Uses Agreement.

BPA and the Corps will continue to coordinate with Federal agencies, States and Tribes on Treaty operations and operating plans.

In addition to seeking the 1.0 MAF of water for spring and summer fish migration in water year 2026, the US Entity will continue to pursue agreement with Canada on long-term Non-Treaty Storage Agreements for flow augmentation of up to 0.5 MAF of dry year storage from Canada. A dry year is defined as a year when the NWRFC May final forecast for April-August runoff at The Dalles Dam is below the 20th percentile for the NWRFC statistical period of record. The statistical 30-year period of record is currently 1991 to 2020, for which the 20th percentile value is 74.8 MAF.

7.2 Upper Snake River Reservoir Operation for Flow Augmentation

Reclamation will attempt to provide 487 KAF annually of flow augmentation from the Reclamation projects in the upper Snake River basin consistent with its Proposed Action as described in the November 2007 Biological Assessment for O&M of its projects in the Snake

River basin above Brownlee Reservoir. Reclamation's flow augmentation program is dependent on willing sellers and must be consistent with State of Idaho law.

7.3 Bonneville Chum Operations

There are three major population groups (MPGs) of Columbia River chum salmon (Coast, Cascade and Gorge), each containing multiple sub-populations (NMFS, Lower Columbia River Recovery Plan, June 2013). The Ives/Pierce Islands spawning area is part of the Lower Gorge sub-population within the Gorge MPG and is the focus of the Bonneville chum operations described below.

As described in the 2020 CRS BA (page 2-47), to support chum spawning and incubation the AAs will provide a Bonneville Dam tailwater elevation of approximately 11.5 feet (MSL) beginning the first week of November (or when chum arrive) and ending in late December. If water supply in the fall is insufficient and chum have not arrived, the start of the operation may be delayed to the second week or later in November or as decided in TMT. The AAs seek to maintain tailwater elevations between 11.3 and 13.0 feet during chum spawning activity in the Ives/Pierce complex. In early November the hydrologic conditions in Hamilton Creek and Hamilton Springs may also be considered when determining the start date. Tailwater elevation for incubation and emergence is set in late December based on both observed redd depth and the forecasted ability to maintain that tailwater elevation through April 10.

The AAs plan to operate the CRS to provide flows to support chum salmon spawning, incubation and egress in the Ives/Pierce Islands spawning areas. The Ives/Pierce Island complex represents a small but important main stem spawning area and provides access to tributary spawning areas directly below Bonneville dam. Listed Lower Columbia River Tule fall Chinook salmon and non-listed up-river bright fall Chinook salmon also spawn in the Ives/Pierce Islands area. Access to spawning habitat in the Ives/Pierce area is primarily a function of the Bonneville Dam tailwater. When the Bonneville Dam tailwater elevation is greater than 11.3 feet above mean sea level (msl) salmon have access to the Ives/Pierce Islands spawning area. Chum access to spawning habitat in Hamilton, Hardy and Duncan creeks is also a function of sufficient tailwater elevation and fall rain events to recharge the aquifer and water up the spawning areas within the creeks.

Chum access and use of the available spawning area in the Ives/Pierce Island complex is driven by Bonneville Dam tailwater elevations as measured at the Tanner Creek gauge. The Tanner Creek gauge is used as it correlates directly with the observed water surface elevations through the Ives/Pierce spawning areas. The daily and hourly variability of tides, wind and tributary flow downstream of Bonneville Dam directly affect the required outflow from Bonneville Dam to achieve a particular tailwater elevation on a daily and hourly basis.

The tailwater operating range used over the last several years has restricted access to spawning habitat in the Ives/Pierce Island area between tailwater elevations of 11.3 and 13.0 feet. During this period most redds have been set such that Bonneville Dam tailwater elevations in the range of 11.3 to 12.5 feet provides adequate protection. As the tailwater elevations increase above 11.3 feet chum typically use habitat available at the lower elevations first. Some chum salmon may spawn at elevations between 12.0 and 13.0 feet, however this habitat area is generally considered

less desirable for chum spawning. As tailwater elevations increase beyond 13.0 feet, new habitat is wetted and becomes available for chum spawning. However, as tailwater elevations increase above 13.5 feet some habitat between 11.3 and 12.0 feet becomes unsuitable for chum due to higher water velocities. At a tailwater of 16.0 feet and greater, chum are forced out of suitable habitat zones. Common spawning areas at lower and higher elevations are mostly spatially distinct but there is some significant overlap. In years of high escapement, it may be possible to maximize the available habitat by first managing the tailwater for the lower elevations to benefit early arrivals, and then as conditions allow, increase the tailwater elevation to allow later arriving adults access to additional spawning habitat.

The magnitude of tributary flow from Hamilton Creek can enable access some spawning areas adjacent to Ives Island when the tailwater is below 12.0 feet. When there is a significant flow in Hamilton Creek, adult chum salmon may have access to Hamilton Creek at tailwater elevations less than 11.3 feet. Verification of this access in the field is required if part of a TMT coordinated change to the chum spawning or incubation criteria. With recent modifications to the fish ladder at Duncan Creek Dam, chum can now access the creek at 11.5 feet tailwater elevation. Since 2000, when the tailwater regulation for chum began, protection levels for incubation and emergence have not been set at elevations higher than 14 feet even when tailwater elevations during the spawning period (November-December) have exceeded 14 feet extended for periods of time. The additional amount of flow augmentation required to support such a high protection tailwater elevation and number of redds established at higher elevations is typically weighed against the likely consequence to the ability to refill Grand Coulee to its spring refill objective.

These impacts were addressed in the 2020 NMFS BiOp which stated that chum salmon spawning operations generally have a lower priority than achieving spring flow objectives or summer refill. If all of the BiOp objectives cannot be met, the AAs will work with NMFS and the regional salmon managers to identify operations that would best benefit salmon while maintaining other fish protection measures.

There are two phases of the Ives/Pierce area chum operations: spawning (typically from early November through late December) and incubation and egress (typically from late December through early April).

7.3.1 Chum Spawning Phase

In the first week of November or when fish arrive (as coordinated with the TMT), Bonneville Dam will start operating to provide a tailwater elevation (TWE) range of 11.3-13.0 feet until spawning ends or December 31. The official project TWE gauge is located 0.9 mile downstream of Bonneville Dam's powerhouse 1 on the Oregon shore, 50 feet upstream of Tanner Creek at river mile 144.5. Generally, the range of outflow from Bonneville Dam required to maintain this TWE can vary from less than the project minimum discharge (58 kcfs) up to 135 kcfs. This range demonstrates the profound effect of natural conditions downstream of Bonneville Dam on the water elevation. Tides, wind, wave and unregulated inflows to the Columbia River all have an influence on the ability to regulate the TWE below Bonneville Dam with the outflow from Bonneville Dam.

In addition to the uncertainty and variability of downstream conditions that affect TWE at Bonneville Dam, there are many upstream variables as well. Generally, the flow at Bonneville Dam is augmented by storage releases from Grand Coulee Dam which can take 1 - 2 days to arrive at Bonneville Dam depending on how the water is passed through several non-federal dams which can alter the shape and timing of the flow. Further, the volume of unregulated flow into the Columbia River upstream of Bonneville Dam is difficult to predict but is critical in meeting targeted tailwater elevations for spawning. The ability to operate Bonneville Dam to a particular TWE constraint is contingent on the ability of the hydrosystem to forecast and manage all of these variables and conditions. Reservoir operations upstream of Bonneville may provide additional water to help support the chum operation.

The Columbia River System is often unable to maintain the TWE within the range of 11.3-13.0 feet during daylight hours throughout the entire spawning period. Significant seasonal rain events commonly require that the operation be modified to manage the additional water. Research to assess the impacts of higher flows (day and night) on chum salmon redd development indicated that increased flows nightly up to 175 kcfs (equivalent to a ~16.5 foot TWE) delayed spawning by temporarily displacing fish until flows decreased, but did not force fish to abandon their redds and search for new locations (Tiffan et al. 2009).

7.3.2 Chum Spawning Operational Steps

The spawning operation should utilize the considerations below to help manage the spawning operation to minimize the required protection level which increases the probability that the protection level can be maintained through egress in the early spring.

- Managing the CRS to maintain a daytime tailwater range between 11.3 and 13.0 feet allows chum to utilize their primary and historic spawning areas in the Ives/Pierce complex. However, fall precipitation can lead to chum spawning at elevations higher than 13.0 feet and make it difficult to provide adequate protection through emergence. Surveys of redd location, elevation and depth provide TMT guidance to setting minimum protection tailwater through emergence. In recent years, the surveyed depth of the chum redds has demonstrated that a protection level of 11.3 feet has been adequate to protect redds through emergence when the daytime tailwater has been maintained between 11.3 and 13.0 feet during the spawning phase of the operation.
- To manage relatively short duration precipitation events TMT will consider an operation that shapes flows higher during the day in order to discourage spawning at higher elevations in the Ives/Pierce Island area during the event as a potential tool to keep redds below high risk elevations. When the event passes, the operation can return to the typical daytime operating range.

Steps 1-7 below describe an example of a transition from a controlled operation to an uncontrolled operation when conditions are such that the daytime TWE range cannot be maintained. The steps are reversed if it is possible to return to a controlled operation and high elevation redds have not been established. There may be changes made to these steps based on the TMT discussion. The following are the typical tailwater operational step:

- 1) Bonneville Dam tailwater will be operated within a range of 11.3–13.0 feet during all hours.
- 2) If necessary to pass additional flow, Bonneville Dam tailwater will be operated up to 16.5 feet during nighttime hours (1700-0600). Highest tailwater elevations will be concentrated around midnight.
- 3) If necessary to pass additional flow, Bonneville Dam tailwater will be operated up to 16.5 feet during nighttime hours (1700-0600). Highest tailwater elevations will be concentrated around midnight.
- 4) If necessary to pass additional flow, Bonneville Dam tailwater operating range will become 13.0–16.5 feet during daytime hours (0600-1700) with no upper limit during nighttime hours. Highest tailwater elevations will be concentrated around midnight. The AAs will notify the TMT of this occurrence and coordinate further operations if necessary.

There are several conditions that have historically precluded the ability to maintain the daytime chum spawning range of 11.3 to 13.0 feet. These events are usually forecasted well in advance, and an appropriate course of action is coordinated through TMT as needed. Below are some examples of the conditions where the chum operation cannot be managed within the above constraints:

- 1) Conditions downstream of Bonneville (e.g., high tides, high inflows) result in high TWE regardless of project discharge. Even at minimum discharge, these conditions could raise the TWE above the target range.
- 2) Heavy precipitation events increase inflow to the Columbia River both upstream and downstream of Bonneville Dam. The combination of low required flow at Bonneville Dam, unregulated inflows to the Columbia River upstream of Bonneville Dam, and the lack of storage capacity behind the lower Columbia River dams, result in little to no control over the resulting TWE below Bonneville Dam.

7.3.3 Chum Incubation and Egress

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will inform the TMT when they establish chum salmon spawning is complete at the Ives/Pierce Island area; this usually occurs in late December but will not extend past December 31. Following the completion of spawning, the operation is shifted to provide a minimum tailwater elevation (as coordinated with TMT). In most years an elevation between 11.3 and 11.7 feet is adequate. Redds established at higher elevations may not be fully protected. The end of the chum protection operation is coordinated with the TMT after it is determined that completion of emergence and egress has occurred or if the volume of flow augmentation required to maintain the protection level jeopardizes spring refill objectives. The chum protection level decision will be revisited at least monthly through the TMT process to assure it is consistent with the need to provide spring flows for listed Columbia and Snake River stocks.

The protection operation typically ends between mid-March and April 10. In some years emergence and egress may not be complete by April 10 and TMT may be asked to extend the

tailwater protection elevation through emergence and egress. TMT will then discuss the impacts of TDG associated with spill and/or operation of the corner collector for fish passage at Bonneville Dam and its potential for negatively affecting fry in the gravel. Typically, spring flow augmentation volumes provide sufficient flows to maintain the protection elevations. Bonneville Dam starts its spring spill on April 10, but a delay in the start of spill or an increased tailwater elevation may be needed to protect emerging chum and chinook salmon from the effects of TDG.

7.3.4 Considerations for Dewatering Chum Redds

While a conservative approach to managing tailwater elevations during spawning reduces the risk of dewatering redds, it does not eliminate dewatering as a possibility. The conditions in each year vary too dramatically to allow for the development of set criteria for whether or not to dewater redds, therefore this decision is coordinated with TMT in-season based on the following factors:

- Number of redds that would be affected and the percentage they represent of:
 - the overall Ives/Pierce Islands and Hamilton Springs complex;
 - the total population spawning above the I-205 Bridge;
 - the entire ESU.
- Emergence timing based on available temperature data;
- Status of the CRS storage reservoir elevations;
- Expected benefit to reservoir levels and river operations which would be provided by the dewatering decision;
- Precipitation and runoff forecasts;
- Expected river operations due to power market environment;
- Status of the upriver spring Chinook, steelhead and sockeye listed stocks;
- Existence and status of a brood contingency plan.

7.3.5 Chum Redd Dewatering and Alternative Maintenance Options

If water supply conditions indicate that it is not possible to maintain the minimum tailwater elevation established in December for Bonneville Dam, the protection level may be reduced to a level that can be maintained. If chum redds are dewatered as a result of diminished water supply conditions a “rewetting operation” once a day for ~1 hour has been utilized as an interim measure to provide some level of protection in the event that water supply conditions improve sufficiently to restore the full protection level.

If protection for all redds has been suspended the TMT will consider an operation to provide egress for chum migrating from habitat in Hamilton, Hardy and Duncan creeks. The potential impact to spring flows as a result of this operation would be evaluated through coordination with the TMT.

7.4 Description of Variable Draft Limits

Variable Draft Limits (VDLs) are monthly draft limits at Grand Coulee and Hungry Horse from January-March 31. These are planned limits to Firm Energy Load Carrying Capability (FELCC)

generation to protect the ability to refill Grand Coulee and Hungry Horse to their April 10 elevation objectives with an 85% and 75% confidence respectively.

The VDLs are based on: (1) The April 10 elevation objective which is calculated from the forecasted March 31 and April 15 FRM elevations (2) statistical inflow volumes (85% exceedance for Grand Coulee and 75% exceedance for Hungry Horse), and (3) actual downstream flow objectives.

VDLs are calculated monthly from January through March after updated volume forecasts and FRM elevations have been issued. The VDL at the end of a period (e.g., January 31) is computed to determine the lowest elevation where the outflow requirements and the April 10 elevation objective can be achieved using a 75%/85% probable inflow volume. For example, Hungry Horse's January VDL is computed as:

- The expected April 10 elevation objective based on January forecast.
- Minus February 1 to April 10 inflow volume of 165.7 ksf (75% statistical inflow volume).
- Plus February 1 to April 10 minimum discharge requirement for Columbia Falls.

The VDL is not a mandatory draft elevation and operation above the VDL is acceptable as long as it is not a higher elevation than the FRM curve, FELCC is already being met, and at-site and downstream flow objectives are also being served. Also, VDLs at Grand Coulee are further limited by VDL lower limits of 1260 feet in January, 1250 feet in February, and 1240 feet in March.

The statistical inflow volumes for Hungry Horse and Grand Coulee are derived as follows:

- Hungry Horse – The inflow volumes used are the 75% probable inflow into Hungry Horse reservoir plus the 75% probable incremental unregulated streamflows at Columbia Falls. The data used to compute these inflow volumes for Hungry Horse are from the 2020 90 WY Modified Streamflows.
- Grand Coulee – The inflow volumes used are the 85% probable regulated inflow volume into Grand Coulee and the 85% probable regulated incremental inflow to Priest Rapids Dam. The data used to compute these inflow volumes will be taken from the results of an in-season ESP hydroregulation study that reflects the most current operational assumptions streamflow forecast.

The slightly deeper draft for winter hydropower flexibility at Dworshak Dam (also referred to as a VDL), will be available January through the end of February, based on the following:

- The expected March FRM elevation.
- The expected releases at Dworshak Dam for hatchery and maintenance flows while still maintaining a 95% confidence of refill.
- The anticipated refill date based on the start of summer flow augmentation.

7.5 Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Project of the Washington State Department of Ecology, Columbia River Water Management Program

7.5.1 Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Releases

The Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Releases portion of Washington State’s Columbia River Water Management Program (CRWMP) results in additional water withdrawals from Lake Roosevelt for both out-of-stream use and instream flows. For every two acre-feet of water put to out-of-stream use, one acre-foot of water will go to instream flows (“*no net loss plus one-third*”). The incremental draft, when fully developed, would result in a release of 82,500 acre-feet in most years, or about 1.0 foot of draft at Lake Roosevelt. In years when the March 1 final forecast of April through September runoff at The Dalles is less than 60 million acre-feet, an additional draft of 50,000 acre-feet for interruptible water users and instream flow will occur, for a total draft of 132,500 acre-feet or about 1.8 feet of draft.

7.5.2 Release Framework and Accounting for Lake Roosevelt Incremental Draft

The only way to demonstrate that the water came from Lake Roosevelt and not stream flows during the juvenile fish migration period is to draft Lake Roosevelt. As described in the 2020 CRS BiOp (page 50), there are two elevation objectives during the juvenile fish migration period: (1) end of June (early July) refill, and (2) August 31 draft, the latter of which is forecast based. When water is released in the April-through-June spring period from the Lake Roosevelt incremental draft water account, then Lake Roosevelt would need to miss refill by that amount. Lake Roosevelt would draft below the end of August draft limit by the amount released in both the spring and July-August summer flow augmentation periods.

7.5.3 2026 Operations

The amount and timing of water to be released in 2026 will not be determined until the March final WSF for April – September at The Dalles is completed. Estimates of 2026 incremental storage releases will be included in the 2026 seasonal update.

7.6 Public Coordination

Actions in the WMP will be coordinated with NMFS, USFWS, and the states and tribes in preseason planning and in-season management of flow and spill operations. This coordination will occur in the TMT process and will utilize the best available science. The WMP and associated documents are posted to the web and available to the public on the TMT website (<https://public.crohms.org/tmt/>). TMT meetings also have conference call information and web-meeting services that are available to the public.

At all appropriate decision points, the AAs will routinely seek timely input and concurrence from the USFWS on all matters affecting ESA-listed fish within the jurisdiction of USFWS through the Columbia River Treaty, International Joint Commission (International Kootenay Lake Board of Control), and all other decision-making processes involving trans-boundary waters in the

Columbia River basin. This will include notification of all meetings and decision points and provision of opportunities to advise the AAs during meetings and in writing, as appropriate.

8. Water Quality

The Corps has completed a comprehensive 2014 Water Quality Plan (WQP) outlining the physical and operational changes that could be used to improve the overall water quality in the mainstem waters of the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia rivers. The plan is available on the following website:

http://pweb.crohms.org/tmt/wq/studies/wq_plan/wq2014.pdf

8.2 Total Dissolved Gas (TDG) Monitoring

Exposure to high levels of TDG over long periods of time can be harmful or lethal to fish. Monitoring in the waters impacted by operations at the dams is necessary where voluntary spill is employed for juvenile fish passage to ensure that gas levels do not exceed TDG thresholds established in applicable state water quality criteria. The Corps TDG monitoring program is described in the TDG Monitoring Plan, which included data quality criteria for fixed monitoring stations, goals related to the accuracy, precision, and completeness of data at each fixed monitoring station and the methodologies that are used in the attempt to achieve those goals, calibration protocols (data quality control), data review and corrections (data quality assurance), and completeness of data. The TDG Monitoring Plan (March 2021) can be found on the following website:

[https://public.crohms.org/tmt/wqnew/tdg_and_temp/2021 TDG Monitoring Plan v20210322.pdf](https://public.crohms.org/tmt/wqnew/tdg_and_temp/2021_TD_G_Monitoring_Plan_v20210322.pdf)

The Reservoir Control Center is responsible for monitoring the TDG and water temperature conditions in waters impacted by Corps projects on the Columbia and Snake rivers. To assess water quality conditions in these waters, the Corps operates TDG and temperature monitors in the forebays and the tailwaters of the lower Columbia River/lower Snake River dams, and other selected river sites. The Corps prepares a Total Dissolved Gas Management Plan (TDG Management Plan) each year (see Appendix 4). This TDG Management Plan provides information addressing planned and forced spill, use of the spill priority list, the process for setting spill caps, TDG management policies, and the TDG monitoring program. Spill caps for individual projects can be found on the following website:

<https://public.crohms.org/tmt/documents/ops/spill/caps/>

9. Dry Water Year Operations

A dry year is defined as a year when the NWRFC May final forecast for April-August runoff at The Dalles Dam is below the 20th percentile for the NWRFC statistical period of record. The statistical 30-year period of record is currently 1991 to 2020, for which the 20th percentile value is 74.8 MAF. Consistent with prior recommendations from NMFS, the AAs propose the following system management actions, where practicable, to benefit migrating salmon and steelhead in dry water years:

- Within the defined draft limits for flow augmentation (i.e., reservoir elevations described for storage projects, basin-specific drawdown targets at Hungry Horse and Libby reservoirs described above), flexibility will be exercised in a dry water year to distribute available water across the expected migration season to optimize biological benefits and anadromous fish survival. The AAs will coordinate use of this flexibility with the Regional Forum through the TMT.
- In dry water years, operating plans developed under the Treaty may result in Treaty reservoirs being operated below their normal refill levels in the late spring and summer, increasing flows during that period relative to a standard refill operation.
- The US Entity will seek storage of 0.5 MAF Dry Water Year storage in water year 2026.
- Bonneville will implement, as appropriate, measures recommended in the *Guide to Tools and Principles for a Dry Year Strategy* (2020 CRS BA, page 2-62) to reduce the effect that energy requirements may pose to ESA-listed species.
- Transport operations will be adaptively managed in dry years for low-flow conditions and coordinated through the Regional Forum process.