

Federal Agencies' Proposed Principles for 2001 FCRPS Operations
March 2, 2001

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Poor water conditions in the Columbia River basin coupled with an extraordinary power market on the West Coast have caused an unprecedented river management situation this year. In recognition of obligations to operate FCRPS projects to meet multiple purposes consistent with: (1) authorizing legislation, (2) additional laws including the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Clean Water Act (CWA), Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, Reclamation Laws, (3) cultural resource laws such as the National Historic Preservation Act, the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act, and (4) existing Biological Opinions for the operation of hydroelectric reservoir projects in the FCRPS and the marketing and transmission of power from those projects, these principles are proposed by the regional offices of the following federal agencies: Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Environmental Protection Agency. These principles recognize that achieving the objectives of the system's multi-purpose operation this year is made more difficult by the continuing poor water conditions, and that the unprecedented power market conditions this year may result in emergency operations of the FCRPS. The six Federal agencies agree to seek consensus on emergency operations that minimize variations from the operations described in existing Biological Opinions, by considering priorities for fish operations to minimize effects on listed and unlisted fish populations, and to seek offsetting measures sufficient to achieve the objectives of the Opinions.

Existing Biological Opinions recognize that water management actions may change due to unforeseeable power system, flood control or other emergencies. Emergencies may include a power emergency; one based on insufficient power supply to meet demand in the Pacific Northwest. There may also be West Coast demand involving health and human safety that requires an emergency response. Any emergency actions should be viewed as a last resort, and will not be used in place of long-term investments necessary to allow full, uninterrupted implementation of the required reservoir operations while maintaining other project purposes, such as an adequate and reliable power system.

It is recognized that federal agencies may, through adaptive management, adjust FCRPS operations over time, as there are deteriorating or improving changes in circumstances, for example water supply, economic outlook, power market conditions, conditions affecting listed fish, fish and wildlife, water quality, cultural resources, or project uses. Continued coordination will ensure federal agencies have current information and appropriate input from all interested parties on which to base their decisions.

These principles are not intended to and do not alter or affect the statutory and other legal rights, authorities, responsibilities, and obligations of the federal agencies and the right and authority to interpret and implement other statutory authority. These principles are intended only to improve the coordination of the federal agencies in their management of the FCRPS,

and are not intended to, nor do they create any right, benefit, or new trust responsibilities, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any person.

ACTIONS PRECEEDING A POWER SYSTEM EMERGENCY DECLARATION

In order to meet Pacific Northwest load requirements the following actions will be taken prior to declaring a power system emergency:

1. Take all steps to provide for voluntary conservation;
2. Implement conservation measures, to the extent possible;
3. Exercise contract provisions that reduce firm load obligations;
4. Pursue purchase of load reductions;
5. Pursue purchases consistent with the economic criteria;
6. Pursue acquisition of irrigation pumping load; or
7. Pursue BPA financial options (will be further detailed)

POWER EMERGENCIES: PRELIMINARY CRITERIA AND PROCESS

1. Assuming an adjustment in FCRPS operations is required to meet power demands, preliminary criteria for declaring a power emergency are:
 - a. Power System Reliability due to insufficiency. Defined as insufficiency of electrical generation to meet Pacific Northwest electrical demand. May also be measured using a quick rise in prices over a few hours or days as an economic indicator of resource scarcity.
 - b. Power System Reliability due to insufficient funds to acquire sufficient electrical generation and maintain other BPA funded activities, including programs to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife. Triggered by greater than a XX% probability of having negative cash reserves in any month in fiscal year 2001. In the interim, to ensure purchase exposure is not in excess of the XX% probability, BPA will make reasonably priced purchases. (All analysis to date has utilized a 20% probability as the threshold.)
2. Procedures to finalize preliminary criteria for declaring a power emergency include:
 - a. Discuss with state fisheries agencies, tribes, governor's offices and other interested parties in the region, the proposed criteria for declaration of an emergency.
 - b. Finalize the criteria for declaring any additional power emergencies by March 15, 2001.
3. All power emergencies will be declared consistent with TMT's Interim Protocols for Emergency Operations dated September 22, 2000, or as subsequently amended, including, as soon as practicable, notice to states and tribes. The Protocols may be found at:
<http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/2000/ManPlan/emerprotocl0922.PDF>.

FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2001 OPERATIONS AS PROPOSED BY FEDERAL AGENCIES

1. Base chum operation of at least 11.7 tailwater below Bonneville.
2. Base power operation of up to 130 kcfs day average flow at Bonneville.
3. Pending the adoption of final criteria for declaration of an emergency, it is understood any power operation above 130 kcfs day average flow at Bonneville will require the declaration of an emergency, and that other power operations may require such a declaration if they also require an adjustment in FCRPS operations.
4. Grand Coulee will be operated with the objective to be at or above elevation 1225 feet through March. Deeper drafts may be necessary to respond to changing conditions and priorities.
5. Operations will be planned/implemented with the objective of avoiding drafting Grand Coulee at a rate greater than 1.5 ft/day.
6. Dworshak will be operated with the objective of operating at minimum release levels in order to maximize refill for summer flow augmentation and temperature control. Higher releases may be necessary to respond to changing conditions and priorities.
7. Headwater storage reservoirs may be used to balance items 1-5 above, including, but not limited to, consideration of ramping rates at Hungry Horse and Libby for bull trout. Daily and hourly ramping rates at Hungry Horse and Libby may be exceeded during power or transmission system emergencies. In addition, variances to these ramping rates will be negotiated through the TMT process during years where runoff forecasting or storage shortfalls occur, or when variances are necessary to provide augmentation water for other listed species.
8. Consistent with existing procedures, convene TMT to seek consensus and recommendations to Federal operators on FCRPS project operations necessary to achieve the principles above, with elevation to Implementation Team or Regional Federal Executives, as necessary.

PROPOSED OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR 2001

1. Recognizing conditions may change, the following are the initial priorities for fish operations in the event full spill and/or flow provisions cannot be implemented in 2001.
 - a) Power/Chum Flows through emergence or April 10, 2001, whichever comes first
 - b) Full fish transportation in the Snake River and consideration of transportation from McNary Dam in the spring
 - c) Spring spill operations at mainstem FCRPS dams
 - d) Balance summer flow augmentation (June 30 refill) and spring spill operations
 - i) Refill of Dworshak has highest priority for providing fish flow and water quality benefits.
 - ii) Ensure sufficient water in Hungry Horse and Libby to provide bull trout minimum flows.
 - e) Summer spill operations at mainstem FCRPS dams
 - f) Vernita Bar Flows
 - g) Spring flow augmentation, with emphasis on May
2. Monitor and evaluate (with EPA technical assistance) and consider effects on water quality and any applicable water quality standards, in determining priorities.
3. Consistent with existing procedures, convene TMT to seek consensus on, and provide greater definition to these priorities, with elevation to Implementation Team or Regional Federal Executives, as necessary.

By March 15, 2001, develop a plan for spring and summer operations based on the agreed upon priorities.