

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL EXECUTIVES
Facilitator's Meeting Summary
May 25, 2001 Meeting

The following are the facilitator's summary notes from the May 25th Regional Executives conference call. These notes are meant to capture the general discussion of those on the call. They are not meant to be a verbatim transcript or a "record" of events. Instead, they are intended to both remind people of the discussion points and keep the process moving by highlighting action items. These notes should not be construed to be final policy statements of any agency or government. Corrections may be made at the next meeting.

Present by Telephone:

Steve Wright, BPA
Dan Opalski, EPA
Donna Darm, NMFS
Brian Brown, NMFS
Keith Hatch, BIA
Don Sampson, CRITFC
Rob Lothrop, CRITFC
Mike White, COE
Bill Shake, USFWS
Judy Danielson, Idaho

Greg Delwiche, BPA
Jim Fodrea, BOR
Fred Olney, USFWS
Alex Smith, BPA
Claude Broncho, Tribal Council Shoshone
Bannock
Carl Markle Confederated Tribes of the
Umatilla Indian Reservation
Mary Verner, Spokane Tribe of Indians
Tim Weaver, Yakama Tribe

Technical Staff and Observers:

Cindy Henriksen, COE
Bob Heinith, CRITFC
Jim Colwin
Shirley Lindstrom, Idaho
Gary Sims, NMFS
Fred Auck, Shoshone
Rob Walton, PPC
Bob Shank, BPA

Pat McGrane, BOR
Scott Corwin, PNGC Power
Ron McKown, BOR
Ray Entz, Kalispel Tribe
Nancy Eschief Murillo, Shoshone Bannock
Shauna McReynolds, PNUCC
Bill Rudolph, Clearing Up

Update on Solicitation for Emergency Proposals:

Alex Smith of BPA updated the group on the status of the solicitation. She told the group that many high priority projects have been re-submitted for review under the energy emergency. Next week BPA will begin the review process by formatting the proposals and then sending them to the ISRP and Northwest Power Planning Council (NWPPC) staff for review. She noted that the NWPPC voted to expedite the review of these proposals, which will begin May 29. Decisions are anticipated in three weeks. CRITFC raised tribal project review issues and Alex said she would get BPA staff in touch with Bob Heinith for feedback.

Spill:

Steve Wright reported that spill began last week at the Dalles and Bonneville. As discussed at the last meeting, BPA has filed with FERC and anticipate FERC's review of the proposed swap with Grant PUD next Wednesday (May 31). Wright also reported that NWPPC has done an updated analysis that indicates better system reliability than previously thought. The addition of new generating facilities, conservation and careful management may have helped improve the region's power situation. Based on this new information, BPA, BOR and COE are doing their own re-evaluation and review of the analysis. In the meantime, BPA believes they should provide interim spill for in-river migrating juvenile fish. Wright said that for purposes of this spill, the Federal agencies are focused on Memorial Day weekend and how to keep flows up while maintaining loads. He said BPA appears to be in a better reliability situation than previously thought. In light of this, they have developed an interim spill plan.

Brian Brown reported that NMFS has suggested an interim plan to increase spill to 12 hours at night at John Day and 12 hours every other night at McNary. This would start 5/25 and remain effective until the NWPPC analysis and review is complete. Volumes at these projects are expected to be 37 kcfs at John Day (30%) and 30 kcfs at McNary. Brown said that because this is the peak for spring chinook migration and just past the peak for steelhead, it is a biologically high priority time for spill. BPA supported NMFS' biological analysis. Wright said BPA has been managing by following the federal priorities established earlier. The new reliability and biological information points to a need to do more than they have been doing for fish. He noted that to do nothing would be a decision that would have its own unfortunate consequences. Wright said the energy level that will be used over the weekend is in the range of 40 mw/months.

CRITFC expressed their support of the proposed actions and said it is a step forward to provide critical protection for the endangered stocks. COE said they are looking forward to reviewing the new information and plan to support the operation through the weekend. They noted that they are concerned with both the short and long term implications of the actions. Tim Weaver of the Yakama Tribes applauded BPA's actions. He said they are doing the right thing for fish and heading in the right direction toward fulfilling treaty responsibilities. Claudio Broncho, of the Shoshone Bannock said they have to support the proposal because it helps their fish too.

In response to questions and concerns about the wisdom of this action, the BOR reported on the refill status of Grand Coulee, which is just above 1259; they are hopeful of reaching the goal of the established 1280 level by the end of June.

BPA reminded everyone that this is an interim action that may be changed after more thorough analysis of the NWPPC's report. They welcome any additional information and encourage timely feedback.

ACTION: Additional information, biological analysis, and other comments should be given to BPA by next Tuesday May 29.

NMFS' Donna Darm acknowledged the great difficulty in making decisions this year and thanked everyone for their continued help and participation in the process. She noted the importance of the involvement from so many of the region's governments. Many others agreed with this sentiment and appreciated being included in the federal government's decision-making process.

Finally, CRITFC requested increased flows from Albeni Falls to support Mid-Columbia stocks over the holiday weekend when loads will drop. The COE responded that they are in a lawsuit and, in the absence of compelling reasons and biological input, they are unable to act on this proposal. USFWS commented on concerns about possible biological harm to bull trout, but noted that upcoming field surveys may lead to other options, such as possible flexibility regarding the refill date. CRITFC asked that the agencies move forward with their biological analysis. COE said once they receive input from NMFS and USFWS, they will make a decision about Albeni Falls. BPA noted they will be operating Grand Coulee to provide 60 kcfs at Priest Rapids, instead of running it to meet load. This new information was much appreciated by tribal representatives.

ACTION ON SPILL PROPOSAL: Brian Brown will send out an email clarifying today's spill decision.

Next scheduled Regional Executives' Meeting: Friday, June 1st, 2001, 9-12, Portland Airport Embassy Suites Hotel. NOTE: June 1st, 2001 was changed to a Conference Call. Please let us know if you have any agenda items that you wish to be included.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Silverberg,
DS Consulting
Meeting facilitator

Changes or corrections to these notes may be requested at the next meeting

Thank you for your continued participation in these regional discussions