

# **COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL EXECUTIVES**

## **Facilitator's Meeting Summary**

**June 29, 2001**

Facilitator: Richard Forester

The following are the facilitator's summary notes from the June 29<sup>th</sup> Regional Executives meeting. These notes are meant to capture the general discussion of those at the meeting. 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. I apologize in advance if I did not hear your name or if I spelled it incorrectly. Please help me out with this! Thanks.

### Present:

Mike White, COE	Greg Delwiche, BPA
Ken Pedde, BOR	Jim Ruff, NMFS
Bill Shake, USFWS	Paul Norman, BPA
Brian Brown, NMFS	Alex Smith, BPA
Eric Bloch, OR	Don Sampson, CRITFC
Therese Lamb, BPA	Jill Banks, BPA
Roy Sampsel, CRITFC	Suzanne Cooper, BPA
Katherine Cheney, BPA	Charlie Grist, NWPPC, OR Office
Claudia Andrews, BPA	Robin Harkless, Facilitation Team
Karen Hunt, BPA	Steve Weiss, NW Energy Coalition
Andrew Englander, Save our Wild Salmon	Annie Wexler, Save our Wild Salmon
Ley Garnett, KPAM radio	Gayle Lear, COE
Darryl Beckmann, BOR	Cindy Henriksen, COE
Fred Olney, USFWS	Jim Litchfield, Montana
Dan Opalski, EPA	Mary Lou Soscia, EPA
Rob Lothrop, CRITFC	Bob Heinith, CRITFC
Gary Sims, NMFS	Doug Arndt, COE
Russ George, WMCI	Mike O'Bryant, Columbia Basin Bulletin
Scott Corwin, PNGC Power	

### On Phone:

Judy Danielson, Idaho NWPPC	Carl Merkle, Umatilla Tribes
Bill Maslen, BPA	Cyrus Noe, Clearing Up
Margaret Fulardo	Mike O'Brian (Columbia Basin)
Randy Settler, Yakama Tribal Council	Jim Nielson (WFWD)
G Holland (NezPerce)	Jim Kempton (Idaho)
Jim Miles (Idaho)	

**Introduction:**

After the introductions Paul Norman (BPA) noted the changed of agenda based on the latest forecast (see below).

**Criteria Updates:**

**Reliability:** Greg Delwiche updated the group with NPCC's latest analysis. The run-off forecast as of yesterday is approximately 2 MAF lower than the criteria for spill (53.9 MAF per July "early bird"). The "early bird" will be the final forecast due to absence of snow pack. Other reliability factors (the nuclear power plant is still off-line and other load and thermal generation uncertainties), has influenced BPA's decision not to spill for summer based on the conclusion that reliability criteria cannot be met.

**Financial:** Mr. Delwiche continued that the current financial analysis needs to be updated for the impacts of the new forecast.

At this point Don Sampson (CRITFC) objected that the decision about no summer spill has been made without consultation with this group. He also stated that the federal declaration does not follow its own criteria and that the fish are being sacrificed for other objectives. CRITFC does not support BPA's analysis and opposes the proposed alternative of drafting Dworshak below 1,520'. The tribes do not distinguish between listed and unlisted fish in their concern. He suggested that BPA make a deal with Idaho Power and begin augmentation from Brownlee immediately in lieu of drafting Dworshak below 1,520'.

Other issues came up regarding the load reduction campaign, the loss of power due to the off-line nuclear plant and purchasing power. Suggestion was made that with reservoirs at BiOp levels and the price of electricity falling, BPA could purchase enough electricity to allow some summer spill. BiOp foresees Grand Coulee at levels lower than 1,282'. Mr. Delwiche responded that the reservoirs needed to be at this level to protect winter reliability and that there were still too many uncertainties to further reduce the operating margin at the dams. He concluded that purchasing power would not provide enough additional water to provide reliability and that should BPA venture into purchasing now it would drive up the price of electricity to unacceptable levels.

Additional comments urged BPA and COE to look at other river operations such as flood control rules, irrigation buy downs, and navigation to conserve additional water for the fish.

**Biological analysis:** Jim Ruff (NMFS) distributed an updated analysis of in-river survival from 2000 BiOp summer spill for listed and unlisted fish. A 600 MW-months spill would impact 52 percent of the fall Chinook run creating a 16 percent relative difference in survival across the entire migration. The discussion looked at the impacts in the Hanford reach and the Snake.

### **Proposed Alternatives:**

The group was asked to discuss alternatives to spill. The following items were listed:

- Draft Dworshak below 1,520'
- Draft Brownlee in lieu of drafting Dworshak below 1,520'
- Increase Northern Pike Minnow Bounty with additional \$300,000
- Accelerated Funding for Dworshak hatchery (cost \$3 M)
- Mitigate for Reduced Harvest Pressure
- Find Funding for Spill
- Possible artificial propagation
- Review Project fish bypass emergency plans developed by FPOM (TMT)

The CRITFC, Nez Perce, and Idaho disagreed with drafting Dworshak below 1,520'. A suggestion was made to discuss cultural resource protection issues directly with the Nez Perce. Idaho Power needs to consent to drafts from Brownlee, but there was no Idaho Power representative at the meeting. Brian Brown (NMFS) reported that they asked FERC to encourage Idaho Power to allow the draft given biological analyses while they are reviewing its summer operating plan. NMFS are still waiting for the results of that conversation but would like to move ahead within the next few days. CRITFC asked if BPA could propose an incentive to Idaho to get the water out earlier. BPA is waiting to hear what Idaho's operating plan is. After discussion of several other alternatives, it appeared to be the consensus of the group that except for finding funds for the spill, these alternatives needed to be addressed at a technical level and examined for cost/benefit. It was suggested that IT was the appropriate forum in which to consider no-spill offsets.

Roy Sampsel raised the notion of longer-term issues, which he and others feel should be the primary topic the discussion by the Regional Executives. Suggesting that we are in an ongoing crisis, which is likely to have long-term repercussions, he suggested a strategic approach to managing the Columbia River for fish. What is needed is more forward planning, which is the real task of this group. How are we going to deal with the drought next year? BPA needs to convene a meeting to frame long-term issues.

There followed a reprise of the discussion for additional cash to provide some summer spill. \$30 million was identified, with numerous speakers urging BPA to be creative in finding the needed funds. Some speakers identified \$30 million as an insignificant amount in the scale of BPA operations, given the potential that a whole generation of fish may be sacrificed without it. There was some incredulity expressed that \$30 million could not be found. In response, those supporting the no-spill decision argued that cash is not the same as water, and that water released now could not be replaced to assure winter reliability.

### **Announcements:**

With that, Alex Smith (BPA) pointed out the Fish and Wildlife EIS, which discusses broader policy issues. The June 22 draft is on the website ([www.salmonrecovery.gov](http://www.salmonrecovery.gov)) and it should be finalized August 6. Comments are requested.

The 2001 Emergency Power System Solicitation and proposed comments were reviewed by the NW Power Planning Council and NMFS. Announcements will be made next week as to which projects were chosen. Longer-term projects are not included on this list. Concerns were voiced over how mitigation efforts will play out.

**Next Steps:**

The following items were identified for further discussion:

- long-term issues (Brian Brown will raise this at the Federal Caucus)
- mitigation/propagation package (BPA)
- relationship between conservation and fish and wildlife program

**Wrap-Up:**

Paul Norman reiterated that BPA is unable to spill, but will monitor conditions and may review the decision if conditions improve. The alternatives mentioned at this meeting will go through the IT process. BPA is committed to a follow-up discussion on longer-term issues. The next meeting will be called as needed.

\*\*\*Changes or corrections to these notes may be requested at the next meeting or via email\*\*\*

Thank you for your continued participation in these regional discussions