

**Columbia River Regional Forum  
System Configuration Team Meeting  
October 19, 2023  
Final Official Notes**

Representatives of Corps, ODFW, WDFW, BPA, NOAA, and others participated in today’s SCT hybrid meeting facilitated by Blane Bellerud, NOAA. Ida Royer, The Corps of Engineers, hosted the WebEx to facilitate better notetaking.

Draft and final SCT notes are available on the COE’s TMT website under the [FPOM link](#). For copies of documents discussed, contact Kathy Ceballos at [kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov). See the final page of these minutes for the list of attendees of today’s meeting.

**1. Update on Budget and Work Plans**

- Updated the spreadsheet with end-of-year FY23 financials.
  - Official ‘Where we landed’.
  - For the Columbia
    - Executed: ~\$5.5M
    - Some of the numbers are higher than CRFM has allocated for funding in FY23 because of carry in.
      - Example: Pit Trawl Funding from the Economy Act Order carried over some funding and executed in October or November.
  - Big year for CRFM, we managed to keep all the projects moving.
- FY24 Update
  - PBud Amount: \$66.6M
  - In a Continuing Resolution (CR) right now.
    - Royer has been told that when you are in a CR, your funding amount is either the PBud, the House Markup, or the Senate Markup whichever is less.
    - All are the same number: \$66.6M
    - Funding is dropped monthly.

- The Corps has put in a monthly request for October and are getting dribbles of that now, so CRFM is moving forward.
- The CR ends on November 17, 2023.
- Right now, Royer is working with Division Program to try and figure out what the game plan is depending on what will happen on November 18. Hopefully the CR will be extended, or they will pass the budget which seems less likely.
- Working hard to keep everything moving forward.
- PBud Reallocation Plan was approved.
  - Minor tweaks are listed in the current spreadsheet.
  - Shoehorned in the McNary Spillway Modeling.
    - Budgeted: \$1.5M
    - Royer suspects this estimate is low and the CRFM Program will probably need to adjust as it moves forward.
  - There are other things in the hopper and bubbling up so it will probably be a bumpy year.
  - Good news is that we currently have sufficient funding for all the needs.
- Ladder Cooling Projects all have started up.
  - John Day, Lower Monumental, McNary
  - Royer also pulled forward Ice Harbor.
    - Royer said that she is going to try and do as Trevor Conder had requested and bundle the ladder cooling projects.
    - SCT did not allocate funding in CRFM for Ice Harbor but Royer thinks that due to the efficiencies that CRFM can potentially gain by bundling she does not see providing the funding in FY24 being an issue.
- Starting McNary Pit Detection Improvements Project.
  - Starting the EDR process to evaluate PIT detection alternatives McNary.
- McNary Avian Deterrence

- The Corps has completed the feasibility report. (Comment from Steven Juhnke: Although there was an avian deterrence feasibility report, it did not result in a selected outcome, other than to recommend development of an avian wire array. Alternatives will be addressed in the EDR, with the input of the NWW FFDRWG reps.
- Planning on going straight to design. Comment from Steven Juhnke: This is not accurate. We are completing an EDR effort in FY24. This alternative analysis phase will end in a selected alternative, to move to design.

Jonathan Ebel, IDFG. said that the rank for Idaho shown on the spreadsheet for Serpentine Weir at Bonneville is '4' and that may have been true at one time, but his spreadsheet shows his last saved rank is a '2'.

Royer said that she will change it on the current spreadsheet version and if anyone else has any changes in rank to please just let her know and she will make those changes and save it on the most current version.

## 2. McNary Modified Spill Operations

- Bellerud cued up a general discussion about the whole Modified Spill situation at McNary and what SCT can do with CRFM funds to help the situation along.
  - There was the idea brought up to use funding to purchase a winch to help with fish passage operations.
  - Doing the modified operation will also require some form of evaluation.
    - Bellerud was asking a FPOM/FFDRWG about doing something like a sensor fish study this fall so we can get a red flag if this is a horrible mistake.
    - Definitely need to have some sort of follow up survival study to see what the effects are during the passage season.
  - Two general categories: funding studies and/or funding fixes.

Bellerud asked for input.

Royer asked if he was asking her or the group.

Bellerud said that he was asking everyone but first he would like to know if those would be qualifying expenses since Royer is the authority on that.

Royer said that a biological evaluation would fall under CRFM.

Erick Van Dyke, ORFW, asked Bellerud if he would be treating this like a long-term solution.

Bellerud said no, but we need to know what is going on to know how urgent it is so that will help us make the case to speed it up. Bellerud said that he is not sure what the fix is, and he cannot remember the date that was put out, but he has gotten dubious about those dates because they keep getting pushed back.

Van Dyke said that this is a systemic issue more than one that needs to be proven as a problem. He said that is just his view of it.

Ebel asked whether the flexibility to fund this kind of an “emergency-type” of evaluation is there under CRFM, can it be housed somewhere.

Royer said yes but the big question for her will be how much it will cost because we have a finite amount of funds for the FY. The question is how it fits in and what do you take from.

Tom Lorz, Umatilla/CRITFC, said that they talked about some alternatives at FPOM like the split lift gate, which is interesting, but as Bellerud noted we want to know if that will kill more fish than it will benefit. They had talked about a lifting beam, Lorz asked if this is all stuff that is covered under the McNary Modeling at \$1.5M. He asked if there is flexibility to use some of those funds and funnel money into that, because it sounds like Royer was thinking there is.

Royer asked if Lorz meant to fund it instead of the modeling.

Lorz said to use that as her cover because it would all be used as part of the modeling because if we are doing split leaf, then the model needs to be able to model split leaf operations.

Royer said that she is not concerned about the justification because this is sort of an emergency, but she is more concerned about making the dollars come out because we have a variety of needs. She said that another option is once Congress passes the budget, CRFM will have the opportunity to request work plan funds. If we get to a point where we do not have enough funding for everything, we can see what options exist to request additional funds in FY24, this is not promised funding and it will depend on the number of zeros we are talking about.

Lorz said that there will be some zeros. He is glad that Walla Walla is on the ground working on stuff, they are doing a test today up at McNary on the split leaf, which he said is wonderful. Lorz said that he is a little concerned that people were not invited to go view that and that there have not been any task groups or work groups set up. He said it is not that he does not love Walla Walla's work, but in times of emergency it is better to cast a bigger net than stay cloistered in a small closet and talk to yourself. Lorz said that they will probably be sending similar messages to the Corps about that because there are some other ideas out there and they would hope that the Corps could at least evaluate and pursue. Lorz said that this is a big deal. He said that we have never operated split leaf for a full season, we would do it off and on mostly for debris, but it has TDG implications, and it has potential injury implications. Lorz said that this is a big deal.

Royer said that it is noted on if the Corps does an evaluation that the region would like to have some input on what it looks like. She said that she thinks that they can create that space either in a forum or with some special subgroups.

Lorz said okay and that he is happy that they are looking at flexibility of how to fund this, he hates that we have to almost get to emergency situations for the funding to break loose but that is just how it has been done for thirty years so it is a tough model to break.

Ebel said that Lorz brought it up but there are a couple options on the table that have not been fully vetted. He said we are going immediately into this discussion of, and Bellerud brought it up and he is right, doing some type of evaluation on the split leaf with sensor fish to evaluate the potential for injury. Ebel said that he has done some studies where it did some testing beforehand and that was not reflective of what actually happened and then he ended up killing a lot of fish. He said that there is purchasing different parts but there are also other opportunities as well for instance other temporary spillway weirs. He said it all depends on where we go to write down the different options of dealing with it and then how does that fit in where we can bring money in, say from a couple of the lower priority things that are funded within CRFM. Ebel said what he heard Royer say was that the evaluation falls under CRFM but what about implementing some type of temporary structural "solution" (Ebel hesitated to call it a solution but did not have an alternative word to use).

Royer said that she is less familiar with the structural side. She said that knows the project and Walla Walla engineering has been much more tied to this. She said that this is more of the FPOM realm and Chris Peery would know more and would be better able to discuss what the options are. She said that she thinks there has been a lot of work on potential options by the Walla Walla team already so she will not be stepping on their toes with her ignorant input.

Scott Bettin, BPA, told Ebel for context TSW cost between \$7-10M per day.

Ebel asked if there is a less expensive way to get one done.

Lorz said yes. He said that it was \$7M for both TSWs, it was \$3.8M and like \$2.2M. He said it was just a bunch of bulkheads and a fancy top gate for the McNary TSWs. RSWs on the other hand, they are expensive.

Bettin said \$25-30M for those. His point was that TSWs are in the many millions, and they take about a year to make in the past.

Lorz said that we basically stole bulkheads from Little Goose (he thought), and they had to basically build and return them. He said if they just have to build a top cap and we can steal a bunch of bulkheads that could get us somewhere. He said that he is hoping that the Corps is looking into that.

Ebel said that his thought is that he goes back to the summaries of the active tag studies and passage routes and the two TSWs at McNary. He said, going off the top of his head, passed something like 40 – 50% of the fish, so if you add one maybe you get pass like 60% survival. So we have got to maximize fish through passage routes where we know they are going to survive at a higher rate. The split leaf thing is an unknown. Ebel said that he would lean toward the TSW because especially if we can get it done quickly and add one and lessen the risk because it might be a couple million dollars but killing 50% of fish when crossing is costly in many other ways.

Bellerud said that he knows that they made the design decision to put two TSWs. He asked if there is any existing data on what increase you get with three or four, anything like that. He said that he would presume that they looked at that and ran the numbers to see what the optimum one was.

Lorz said not really, he said that it was more of an experiment. At John Day, they moved them to different locations and at McNary they just decided to put them next to the PH to draw as many fish from the PH to the spillway to put the biggest neck. There was talk about doing a study but as we have increased spill the benefit of the TSW has dropped off because when you are spilling 100% of the river if one or two step out it is not going to buy you a hell of a lot. Lorz said that if in this situations where any fish that go through the spillway in a split leaf you could have a much higher level of mortality than we would ever want to have. He said that this is a problem, and he knows that people will say well just send us spill and we'll put them through the bypass. That is another issue in itself but there are times when we are not going to have the capacity to do that. We are still going to have spillway passed fish that we have to deal with as best we can.

Bettin said that the other issue was the tailrace condition with too many TSWs is pretty crazy. The power flow jets in just a few places.

Lorz said that was the thought. You have two at the north end and you put one toward the south end and then you balance it out. He said yes, the pattern is going to suck, he said the pattern last year sucked. Lorz said that we have not had our preferred spill pattern for several years now and unfortunately, it is almost impossible to tease out what the impact to that is with our current PIT tag array system. He said yeah, this is going to suck, this is not the preferred and ideal situation, but we are going to try and make best we can out of it. he is a little concerned because the Corps memo took time to write, it is something that has been in the works for a while now, and it is a little late in the season. Lorz said that he is a little disappointed that this was not brought up soon so we would have had more time to work on it. Now we are going to be absolutely backs against the wall limited options and we are going to have to pick something that is not very good. Lorz said that he is hoping that is something that is going to change and that we are going to be much more collaborative. He apologized to Royer that she is the one that has to be the one to stick the message on this, but this is the first big meeting after FPOM, so they have had time to think and look through and see that it is getting real, real quick.

Ebel said that he would put it differently than Lorz. He said that maybe it would have been fine but if you think about it from a risk analysis standpoint if this does not pan out. He asked what we should do, he said that appears that Walla Walla is keeping it close to the vest here. He said that Royer is telling them that it is more of an FPOM issue even though SCT may hold the funds. He asked, definitely from an evaluation standpoint and potentially from a structural standpoint, which we could frame as an evaluation, what do we do. He asked whether there should be a hybrid workgroup. He asked Royer how we move from a CRFM perspective; what does Royer need from Fish Managers and within the Action Agencies to be able to decide or to move on a recommendation from a funding perspective.

Royer said that she knows that Walla Walla fish biologists are trying getting cost estimates for different biological evaluations. Once she knows a relative amount of cost as well as what we are doing then she can figure out where to pull funding and provide that. Internally they are working on that, the question is what the process is for that. She does not want to dump that on Steve Junke as the Walla Walla representative, but she assumes that this will be discussed at the next FFDRWG or the next forum. She said that if it needs to happen sooner, we can arrange some sort of meeting.

Ebel said he thinks the take home from the Fish Managers is that they are looking for Fish Manager participation or inclusion sooner rather than later so how do we move in that direction. Ebel asked if they need to shake the tree hard or what.

Steve Junke said everyone else is at the project right now. He said that Chris Peery and Ryan Laughery are the leads on the investigation of the split leaf. Chuck Barnes is the lead on the evaluation piece, so he has been communicating with the contractors who do

sensor fish, and the balloon tag studies, and those estimates are very close. Junke said what comes out of today's evaluation he cannot speak to who was invited and who was not, he is not sure how Ryan communicated all of that. Junke talked to Ryan yesterday and Ryan apologized for not inviting him. They are filming the evaluation. They are doing some water quality monitoring associated with those various treatments and Junke trusts that Ryan is going to provide that information to help with decision making from here.

Ebel told Junke that is great. He said that a fellow in his agency, before he retired, said that sometimes Ebel will need to remind the Corps of something, and that is the Corps is not a Fish Manager and the Fish Managers need to be included in these discussions and discussions of possible solutions. Lorz was alluding to that, but Ebel said that he will put it more frankly.

Junke said that Chris Peery sent out a communication Monday explaining what today's evaluations was going to entail and again Junke said that he trusts that we are going to have some good information. Whether it is in a negative or a positive outcome he is not sure but there will be follow-up conversations. He said that this experiment may rule in or rule out this as a future option. He does not think that this evaluation is not ruling out the other options, such as the lifting beam for reducing the weight capacity issues. He said again Ryan and Chris are the leads on this and he would expect additional communication from them as soon as they can compile the results.

Bellerud said that it sounds like we need to establish a working group. He said that he is not sure if it is more appropriate through FPOM or whatever, so we can have all the groups involved. There is a point where the court can bring reports on these various things, keep us updated, ideas can be exchanged more neatly than a once-a-month meeting that has 84 other things to take care of. He said that he thinks we need to come up with a point focus so we can have proper interactions because the opportunities for a total fiasco here are just way too big. So we want to make sure that we do everything right, and we coordinate, and it will come out the way it comes out, but we need to try to do the right thing and do it properly so we can achieve the optimum result.

Lorz told Junke that he would strongly encourage spillway development has always been a FFDRWG process and the fact that we are look at lifting beams and new spill patterns this should be a FFDRWG subgroup, and with an emergency situation like this we should be meeting at least every other week, if just even for a check in. He said that he will be sending an email or something fancier than that, to that effect. He said that he is just giving a heads up.

Junke said that he understood.



Bellerud said that he agrees with Lorz and if FFDRWG is the right venue he will send a letter email to the chairman and tell him that Bellerud thinks that we need to do this .

Ebel asked if he needs state support in that request.

Blane said sure, especially if it is just an email. He said that it does not need to be anything super official. Like, we are really concerned about this, we want to make sure everything gets coordinated right with good back and forth, we are requesting that you form a working group to deal with this.<sup>1</sup>

Ebel said that er will coordinate to give it to him from multiple directions.

Bellerud asked who the FFDRWG chair is.

Junke said that would be Chuck Barnes and Jake Macdonald. He said that Jake Macdonald sent out an update for a proposed meeting change for the next FFDRWG meeting from the first week of November to the second week because of some conflicting meetings. Junke said that it is safe to include both Jake and Chuck in those communications as far as adding this to the next FFDRWG.

Ebel said that he did not know whether that would be adding it to that meeting, it would be creating a separate one.

Bellerud said however we form the group, if he would like to talk about it first, I guess we could wait until then. Bellerud said that he would like it to be sooner. He is curious about this video to see what it looks like. It may not reveal anything, but it would at least make him feel a little better about it.

Areas where SCT can help:

- Study and evaluations.
- Potential additional TSW proposal to get scoped out.
- Send email to Chuck Barnes and/or Jake McDonald

Carolina Andes, BPA, said that her understanding is that during the study phases a lot of the processes have Agency Technical Review (ATR) review process. Every design section and input are provided to the study. Every milestone that they hit of the study phase they have the feedback from another agency. They have feedback for the mechanical, technical infrastructure, and in this case the concerns are regarding the feature is not going to be closed in. She said that we can actually make sure that we are part of the review process to make sure the technicality is also being done correctly. She

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<sup>1</sup> Blane Bellerud provided an email following the meeting.

said that she knows that this will not follow the study phase, but we can definitely request they include us on that review process as they move along.

Bellerud said that is a very good suggestion and thanked Andes. He said that it always helps when there is an existing structure that we can tag onto rather than trying to create something new. Bellerud said that he will include that too.

- Request access to the ATR.

### ***Ongoing Topics***

- McNary Spill

### **Next Agenda Topics**

- a.

**Next meeting: November 15, 2023 (Hybrid)**

NOAA offices at 1201 NE Lloyd in Portland (11th floor)

**Today's Attendees:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
<b>Ben Hausmann</b>	<i>BPA</i>
<b>Carolina Andes</b>	<i>BPA</i>
<b>Christine Peterson</b>	<i>BPA</i>
<b>Scott Bettin</b>	<i>BPA</i>
<b>Ida Royer</b>	<i>Corps</i>
<b>Steven Junke</b>	<i>Corps</i>
<b>Jonathan Ebel</b>	<i>IDFG</i>
<b>Blane Bellerud (host)</b>	<i>NOAA</i>
<b>Dana Bethea</b>	<i>NOAA</i>
<b>Kelsey Sweica</b>	<i>NOAA</i>
<b>Kate Self</b>	<i>NW Council</i>
<b>Erick Van Dyke</b>	<i>ODFW</i>
<b>Tom Lorz</b>	<i>Umatilla/CRITFC</i>
<b>Tom Iverson</b>	<i>Yakima Nations</i>

*Minutes by Andrea Ausmus, CorSource Technology Group LLC, Contractor for Bonneville, [amausmus@bpa.gov](mailto:amausmus@bpa.gov) (971-442-5931).*

*Please send any requested edits to Kathy Ceballos, NOAA, [kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov).*

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<sup>i</sup> Email sent by Blane Bellerud<sup>i</sup>

From: **Blane Bellerud - NOAA Federal** <[blane.bellerud@noaa.gov](mailto:blane.bellerud@noaa.gov)>  
Date: Thu, Oct 19, 2023 at 9:52 AM  
Subject: FFRWG working group for McNary Split Leaf spill operations  
To: Barnes, Charles A Jr CIV USARMY CENWW (US) <[Charles.A.Barnes@usace.army.mil](mailto:Charles.A.Barnes@usace.army.mil)>, Jake MacDonald <[Jacob.Macdonald@usace.army.mil](mailto:Jacob.Macdonald@usace.army.mil)>, Ritchie Graves <[ritchie.graves@noaa.gov](mailto:ritchie.graves@noaa.gov)>, Trevor Conder <[trevor.conder@noaa.gov](mailto:trevor.conder@noaa.gov)>

Hello,

There was a lot of concern expressed over the proposed McNary split leaf spill operations at our SCT meeting today. To ensure good communication and input we are requesting that you establish a FFRWG subgroup to address this issue, and to incorporate the subgroup into the ATR process for issues concerning the proposed operation. This subgroup would likely require more frequent meetings than the usual FFRWG schedule due to the short timeline and rapidly developing nature of this issue. The degree of uncertainty and the magnitude of potential negative effects of the proposed operation more than warrant the formation of a subgroup to address it.

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