

WATER Steering Team Meeting

July 14th, 2017

DS Consulting Office

http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/tmt/documents/FPOM/2010/Willamette_Coordination/

Facilitator's Summary

In Attendance for all or part of the meeting: Leslie Bach (NPCC), Ian Chane (Corps), Diana Dishman (NMFS), Bernadette Graham-Hudson (ODFW), Mike Hudson (USFWS), Marc Liverman (NMFS), and Dan Spear (BPA); On the phone: no one.

Facilitation Team: Donna Silverberg, Emily Stranz, and Alyssa Bonini (DS Consulting)

Welcome, introductions, & housekeeping

Donna welcomed that group to the meeting, noting that the purpose of the session was to discuss issues and seek consensus on process, substance and outcomes for efforts that affect participants engaged in the Willamette system.

The group reviewed the June 26th Steering Team meeting summary and offered additional edits. One clarification that was that the RME Team is asking for clear directions on what can and cannot be funded, so that they do not spend more time and energy discussing concepts that are not going to move forward.

Due to the number of edits, DS Consulting agreed to provide a revised version, including all of the suggested edits, to the Steering Team for review and approval at the July 28th joint RM&E and Steering Team meeting. The group agreed on this process. It was also noted that DS Consulting needs to send out the finalized May meeting summary.

→ **ACTION:** Emily will send the finalized 5/11 summary to the Steering Team. Emily will incorporate today's noted edits into the 6/26 summary and send it to the Team in preparation for approval at the joint RME/ST meeting on 7/28.

The group expanded on their previous conversation regarding RM&E concept prioritization and funding process. Marc revisited the FY17 Concept Summary chart that the RM&E Team drafted to aide conversations with the Steering Team (first draft provided during the June 26th meeting). He suggested that the reason for adding a column noting the potential funding source is to provide rationale about why or why not a concept could be funded and from which available sources. It was noted that projects that do not fit within parameters for CRFM or O&M funds may be addressed through separate processes at the RM&E and Steering Teams levels. The RM&E Team should discuss all the studies needed to inform management, keeping a list of those that should be conducted but do not fit CRFM or O&M criteria. This way, the list of studies is not lost and the Steering Team can work to identify potential funding sources for those studies.

Additionally, it agreed that the Steering and RM&E Teams will hold annual brainstorming sessions to identify which concepts to develop in the upcoming year. It was noted that the sub-basin plans will be instrumental in providing annual direction.

➤ **ACTION:** The joint brainstorming meeting is on the annual WATER calendar for March. Ian noted that the joint meeting will also be an opportunity to discuss funding mechanisms.

Updates & Process Check-in

Steering Team members shared brief updates on their individual agency and tribes' WATER related efforts in the basin. Donna noted that this "round-robin" briefing is an opportunity to update each other on current work in the region to ensure that team members are aware and tracking what's happening, and to build possibilities for partnering with others:

ODFW: Bernadette did not have any updates to share at the time.

Corps: Ian reported that Colonel Aguiar is leaving duty with the Portland District and Colonel Dorff will assume command. Colonel Dorff is coming in from active duty and there will be opportunities to educate him on the complexities of the Willamette system.

BPA/Corps: Dan updated the group on BPA and Corps conversations regarding the operational drawdown called for in the Middle Fork RM&E Plan. He noted that, previously, the Corps conducted an assessment which showed that the drawdown was physically possible and then started moving forward with an Environmental Assessment (EA). Once conducting the EA, the Corps and BPA started to get a better understanding of what the operation would look like with the physical constraints. Although the drawdown is for two weeks, to get the reservoir to that level safely, the operation would take 3-4 months, depending on hydrology. The AA's legal counsel looked at the proposed operation and noted that hydropower generation is the project purpose authorized to be implemented during the time of the proposed drawdown (along with flood control). Legal counsel also said the project purpose may not be set aside for that long of a study duration. The project authorizations are located in House Document 531. Dan also noted that the operation would cause a significant loss of revenue for BPA (estimated to be around \$1 million).

Additionally, the AA's legal teams are contemplating whether an EA is sufficient for this operation, or if a joint agency Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is necessary. Marc noted that the HD 531 does not state that an EIS is required and encouraged the Corps and BPA to look into this further. Ian noted that the Corps had originally thought an EA was sufficient and said that he would follow up with legal on this.

→ **ACTION:** Ian will request that the AA lawyers reconsider whether an EA or EIS is required.

Dan apologized for the unfortunate news at this point in the process and suggested that next time, during the early stages of idea exploration and assessment, the region should take time to make sure that the project and its wider implications are clearly understood. He noted that the region is welcome to attend a meeting on Wednesday, July 19, to better understand BPA's assessment of the situation. Mike pointed out that the August 2016 draft EA contemplated an October to February drawdown period and noted the impact to the power pool. He suggested that there had been plenty of time for BPA and the Corps to understand the impacts, and derailing the effort at this point impacts the implementation and schedule of the Middle Fork RM&E Sub-Basin Plan. Ian noted that, from the Corps' perspective, if the region wants to explore a deep drawdown as a real option in the future, they will need to fully understand what flexibility exists within the authority. He said the Corps is still interested in exploring options for implementing some variation of the drawdown in FY17. He asked the region to consider options that are less impactful on the project authority; for example, is there a smaller dip that can be implemented and still provide valuable data?

→ **ACTION:** Marc will send the August 2016 draft Environmental Assessment to the Steering Team.

The group briefly discussed the process for changing the project authorization. Ian noted that one would need to seek a post authorization change, which may take over a year. At this point, there is not enough information to know whether the operation would be impactful and if an authorization change is

warranted. The BPA and Corps still need to talk more on the authorities. Marc suggested that NMFS legal counsel would connect with BPA and Corps' counsel.

→ **ACTION:** Ian and Dan will work with Corps/BPA legal counsel to better understand flexibility in project authority; they will request that this meeting happen before the currently scheduled session in mid-August. Marc will encourage NMFS legal counsel to connect with BPA and the Corps'.

The group discussed options for a FY17 baseline study. From Ian's point of view, the baseline data could provide route specific survival data that could be helpful for informing a potential operational fix in the future. Marc suggested that Rich and Stephanie add the potential baseline discussion to the Head of Reservoir (HOR) workshop they are organizing for late fall. It was suggested that the workshop be moved up, if possible, at least to early fall. Additionally, Ian agreed that the Corps will continue work to wrap up the environmental documents.

→ **ACTION:** Ian and Marc will connect with Rich and Stephanie with the request to add the baseline study to the HOR workshop, as well as the request to schedule the workshop sooner than later. The Corps will continue efforts on the environmental documents for the drawdown operation.

Donna offered that, in other similarly complex NEPA processes she has facilitated, a managers and solicitors team was created so they could come together a few times throughout the process for a check in; she wondered whether this may be something the region should consider building into the WATER process.

NMFS: Marc reported on NMFS' concerns regarding the decision not to fund hatchery M&E in 2017. He recapped NMFS' comments that they sent to the Steering Team in response to the Corps' MOC (MOC WVP01), noting that at the June Steering Team meeting Tammy mentioned an MOC would come out, and it came out the next day. In part, NMFS was frustrated that the MOC came out during an Executive elevation process, which consisted of conversations between Dave Ponganis and Barry Thom. Marc provided an update on the Executive elevation process, noting that conversations are complete, and Ponganis assured Thom that the M&E was not going to happen in 2017, but the Corps would try to secure funding for it in 2018.

Marc noted that NMFS' believes the Corps should have consulted with the WATER teams prior to making the decision on the M&E funding, as the M&E is a compilation of studies that could have been implemented. He suggested that if consulted, WATER might have suggested a compromise other than trout production in place of M&E. Marc stressed that the Corps' not consulting with the WATER members on this is a trust breaker. The decision authority is the Corps'; however, they still can and should discuss decisions, ideas, and options with the region for input. Marc said he hopes the region we can work to close the gap between the process outlined in the WATER Guidelines and what is really happening on a day-to-day basis. The WATER Guidelines commit its members to a process by which members are able to provide input that actually gets heard.

Ian noted that the MOC was sent out as a response to the region after the Corps learned at the Steering Team meeting that the Steering team wanted to weigh in on the decision. He said the Corps will request funding for baseline M&E next year, however, it is unclear whether or not they will receive it. Bernadette requested that Ian update the Steering Team ASAP on the likelihood of the Corps receiving O&M funding for FY18, as well as how the work will be put out for solicitation. ODFW has a lot of equipment in place that they will need to remove if they are not able to apply for the work.

→ **ACTION:** Ian will provide an update on the likelihood of the Corps receiving O&M funding for FY18, as well as how the work will be put out for solicitation as soon as possible.

Donna encouraged the group to share with each other the reason for *why* information such as the M&E information is important - why is it valuable for the region? She noted that in collaborative relationships, if you are going to ask for input on information, it is best to let partners know when and why you are doing it—and how the input will be used. This will help build trust that can be lessened without clarity of purpose and communication.

NPCC: Leslie did not have any updates to share at the time.

USFWS: Mike reported that USFWS has made changes to how they will staff WATER teams: Rollie will be the representative at the Managers Forum and Mike will be the representative at both the Steering and RM&E Teams. He noted that more changes may take place in the future and suggested that if there are concerns about the same representative on multiple WATER team, they should be shared with Rollie.

Updates on tech team work:

RM&E Team: the RM&E Team is working to update the FY17 Concept Summary chart for the joint RM&E/ST meeting on July 28th.

Hatchery Management Team: the HMT has stood up their summer steelhead working group as a subset of the HMT and part of the Proposed Action in the RPA. There was a request for Steering Team members to support that work as possible.

Flow Team: there were no updates from the Flow Team. However, a request was made to invite Gloria Nicolas (Willamette Basin Review Project Manager) to a Steering Team meeting to share information on the Willamette Basin Review (WBR). Ian will see if Gloria can come in August. Ian had been tasked with providing more information on the Review, but he was unable to connect with Rich prior to the day's session. He will update the group at the August meeting.

→ **ACTION:** Ian will invite Gloria to the August Steering Team meeting; he will also connect with Rich in order to provide information on the WBR at the August Steering Team meeting.

Check in on Annual WATER calendar

The group reviewed and edited the draft version of the annual WATER calendar. The DS Consulting Team will incorporate the edits and provide a revised version to the team. Donna asked the group to continue thinking about what needs to be added to support the Managers Forum meetings, especially the one in September.

Decision on Next RM&E Sub-Basin Plan

The Steering Team discussed which sub-basin the RM&E team should develop the next sub-basin plan. They noted that the McKenzie should be next due to the upcoming work planned for Cougar. However, they also wanted the RM&E team to have an opportunity to weigh in on whether there are reasons NOT to do the McKenzie sub-basin plan next. The Steering Team agreed with consensus that the next sub-basin plan should developed for the McKenzie and that they would ask the RM&E team to provide input as to whether there is any reason why it shouldn't be next. They requested the facilitators add this decision point to the July 27th RM&E team meeting so that the RM&E team comes to the July 28th joint meeting ready to support a regional decision.

- **ACTION:** DS Consulting will add an agenda item to the July 27th RM&E Team Agenda regarding whether or not the McKenzie should be the next sub-basin for plan development. They will also add a decision item to the July 28th joint RM&E/ST meeting agenda.

Ian noted that the sub-basin plans will help with Corps' budgeting process. Additionally, the plans should include both pre- and post-RM&E for construction. Also, the sub-basin plans need to consider the nexus with the Reintroduction plans, which need to be drafted by NMFS and ODFW. Donna encouraged NMFS and ODFW to get their meeting scheduled to discuss the Reintroduction plans prior to the September Managers Forum meeting.

- **ACTION:** Bernadette and Marc will coordinate a time for ODFW and NMFS to meet on the Reintroduction plans before the end of September.

Corps Presentation of FY18 Budget

Ian provided a brief update on the FY 17 budget. He explained that the mid-year budget is 'locked' for FY17 and includes 52 CRFM projects. He provided a budget sheet that showed how much each project is allocated.

He explained that the budget shows the capability of what the Corps can get done by the end of the fiscal year. He noted the Corps needs to stick within the total budget of \$83.67 million, which includes projects in the Columbia and Willamette River systems. As always, there will be some shifting of allocations along the way and Ian promised the Steering Team that he will work with them when there is a need to move money between projects. Ian clarified that the flexibility to move money between projects is limited and reiterated that the total project allocations are locked.

Ian walked the group through the Willamette allocations, noting that the work includes RM&E for each sub-basin, actuals through June, as well as contracting and labor through September. Ian believes the uncertainties are mostly with the Fall Creek adult fish facility; he expects costs could either go up or down. Fortunately, the Foster fish weir came in lower than expected. Overall, the RM&E costs were greater than originally budgeted for, but they were able to fully fund it.

In regards to the FY18 budget, Ian noted that Tammy Mackey and Greg Taylor will be join the August Steering Team meeting for discussion and the date needs to be rescheduled to accommodate their schedule.

Issue Elevation and Resolution Process

The group recapped the issue elevation and resolution process outlined in the 2017 WATER Guidelines. Members noted that a visual depiction of the process they can turn to quickly for reference would be helpful. Additionally, Donna suggested an issue resolution tracking system that signals progress on an issue, e.g. when resolution has occurred and what the resolution was. Ideally, this will be available on the WATER website for everyone to access.

The group also discussed the need for an issue elevation form that could be used to raise issues up to the next level. Donna offered for her team to draft a form that the Steering Team can consider at their August meeting.

- **ACTION:** DS Consulting will create a draft issue elevation form for the Steering Team to review at their August meeting. Members are encouraged to send any internal elevation forms they have to DS Consulting as examples. DS Consulting also will draft a visual depiction of the WATER elevation process for the August meeting.

→ **ACTION:** DS Consulting will follow-up on the status of the three issues elevated and report back to the Steering Team with any additional action items.

Big Cliff: COP and TDG Issues

At the June meeting, the Steering Team discussed the continued TDG issues at Big Cliff and requested more information to inform future conversations about potential paths forward. As a result, Bernadette, Dan and Ian drafted a suggested path forward to share with the Steering Team with the hope of further clarifying the issues and next steps. Their suggested path forward included:

1. Analysis of the current TDG situation, including cause and frequency of exceedences, impacts, and results of the Foster study;
2. Review of the South Santiam TDG information as it pertains to the North Santiam, when available; and
3. Explore the potential for a study in either FY17 or FY18 specific to TDG at depth below Big Cliff.

A 2016 issue paper drafted by Ian was provided to the group for background. Bernadette suggested the region should use this opportunity to comment on the paper, since that did not occur in 2016. Additionally, Ian noted that he met with the Chief of Reservoir Operations and she is willing to help compile necessary information for the Steering Team. Diana joined the ST for this portion of the meeting and noted that she summarized the last two years of TDG data from water quality reports and MOCs. There is not a complete record as to why the exceedences happened before 2016 because the MOCs were implemented in 2016. Diana walked the group through the data that she compiled. It also will be sent out to the Steering Team along with the meeting summary.

Diana noted that exceedences happen throughout the year and often are associated with: spill due to high flows; unexpected and planned outages; using the ROs for temperature control; and power requests. Exposure of TDG over 110-115% can be lethal to fry, thus the BiOp states that outages should not take place between late December and March because that is when fry are most susceptible to the increased gas. Diana also pointed out that the TDG below Big Cliff is measured at Niagara, which is about 3 miles downstream, at which point TDG has dissipated some. Additionally, TDG levels at the Minto fish facility are high and Minto is another mile downstream of the Niagara gauge. In the past, Minto has had to release fish early due to high levels of TDG.

During flood control operations the Corps is exempt from TDG standards, however, the criteria for a “flood control operation” is not clear. The Steering Team suggested that the Corps needs to clarify what they consider a flood control operation and what criteria triggers those operations. Ian shared that the flood control season is anytime outside of the conservation season. Additionally, he noted that the Corps is required to follow water quality standards unless it is out of their control, for instance during flood control operations or a tree falling on a line causing an outage.

→ **ACTION:** Ian will seek policy clarification on what is determined “flood control operation”; he will bring this to the August Steering Team meeting.

Ian noted that some of the information from the PNNL study at Foster (*TDG levels below Foster Dam and Implication for Chinook and Steelhead Populations*) can be used to inform the conversation on Big Cliff TDG. Additionally, there is an upcoming USGS study that will be informative. Diana shared some of the details of the PNNL study and noted that because there is no information on where fish spawn below Big Cliff there is no way to tell the full impact. Ian asked the group to consider potential FY17 or 18 studies that could provide more insight on TDG at Big Cliff. Two studies were discussed:

1. Redd depth and gas levels: this study had full support from the Steering Team and they agreed to request that the RM&E Team design a study for FY17.

2. Carrying capacity/habitat study: Most at the table did not see a need for this study at this point in the process. Instead, they suggested that the necessary information could be provided by the RM&E Team and others working in the area.

Mike questioned the potential outcome of any research, as the region seems to be past the point of integrating a TDG fix downstream as it was not included in the COP. It was suggested that this question may need to be elevated to the Managers at the September meeting.

- **ACTION:** Request that the RM&E Team develop a study for redd depth and gas levels for FY17 (before the South Santiam study is complete). The study should include whether additional gauges are needed and where.
- **ACTION:** Request input from the RM&E Team and those who have studied the reach, regarding how good the habitat is (given the information that is currently available).
- **ACTION:** Add the Big Cliff TDG issue to the September Managers Forum meeting agenda to discuss possible solutions, including the potential need for a change to the rule curve and/or structural changes.

Mike pointed out that there are two approaches the region could take: exclude fish from the reach or fix the TDG issue. The group recalled that there are very few places to put wild fish in the sub-basin and this reach was chosen as a wild fish reserve, in part due to the fact that it is a closed reach where PHOS could be controlled. Bernadette reminded everyone that ODFW are also seeing TDG impacts at Minto and likely fish can be experiencing the same impacts downstream from Minto, not just in this reach. The group agreed that they need a comprehensive understanding of what the potential operational changes could be to improve TDG. Together, they brainstormed:

- Spill evenly across the spillbays
- Move spill elsewhere in the Willamette system to prioritize reducing TDG at Big Cliff.
 - Create a TDG/spill priority list.
- Shape spill for flood operations to spike releases, this will allow for shorter durations of high TDG.
- Synthesize lessons learned from past operations: if there is something working well, know it and add it to the WFOP and modelling.
- Look at the fill and spill timelines.

After brainstorming, the group agreed that some of these changes could be made now to improve TDG in the short term. NMFS agreed to submit a change form to the WFOP to request spilling across more bays at Big Cliff come October. Additionally, the region will work to develop a TDG/spill priority list for the basin, aimed at reducing TDG at Big Cliff by spilling at other projects. This would be followed by revisiting the timeframes for fill and spill operations.

- **ACTION:** NMFS will submit a change request to the WFOP to request to spill across more bays at Big Cliff, starting in October.
- **ACTION:** Coordinate with the region to develop a spill/TDG priority list for the region and then look at the fill and spill timeframes.

Clarify the process for prioritizing RM&E proposal concepts

The Steering Team clarified the process moving forward for RM&E concept prioritization. They suggested that the regional prioritization should take place at the joint RM&E/Steering Team meeting

July 28th. The proposals would be revisited in September to allow for real time adjustments as proposals come in and the contracts are awarded.

The group brainstormed the steering team's role in the prioritization process:

- Separate out the concepts into two groups: where there is consensus and where there is not consensus.
 - Steering Team will then work to resolve the non-technical conflicts between the AAs and others at the table.
 - They will do so while considering the management decision that the concept is informing.
- Establish the priority of the concept based on its ability to inform management decisions.
- Determine how the concept could be funded and the potential funding source.

Donna outlined the steps in the prioritization process, following the process that the Systems Configuration Team uses on the Columbia;

- 1) In preparation for the joint RM&E/ST meeting, each agency will meet internally to rank the concepts on a scale of 1 – 5 (1=low, 5=high; for concepts that the agency does not have enough information on or does not want to rank for the record, they can use a “D” for defer. D's will not be averaged into the ranked score.)
- 2) During the joint meeting, each ranking will be noted and combined into the tally.
- 3) The combined tally will be shown from highest to lowest.
- 4) At that point, the Corps will provide information on whether or not the concept fits within the parameters of their funding mechanisms
- 5) Concepts that fit: Steering team will direct the RM&E Team to develop concepts for FY18.
- 6) Concepts that do not fit within the CRFM or O&M funding parameters will go back to the Steering Team to determine the resolution path.

→ **ACTION: Each agency will meet internally with RM&E and ST members to prioritize their FY18 concepts from 1(high)-5(low); they will come prepared to share their rankings at the July 28th joint meeting.**

Next Steps

The Federal Family will coordinate rescheduling the conversations on the LOP drawdown to sooner than later (before mid-August). They will also meet to discuss Greg Taylor's screwtrapping proposal and ongoing issues that are not yet resolved (example, Green Peter). The Federal Family will bring a report back to the August Steering Team meeting.

Both NMFS and the Corps will continue work on the Big Cliff TDG issues, with NMFS submitting a change request, and the Corps gathering more information on the parameters of flood control operations.

All WATER members will meet internally to prioritize FY 18 concepts in preparation for the July 28th meeting.

DS Consulting will help add process clarity to the elevation process by drafting an elevation form and tracking system for the Steering Team to review.

With that, Donna thanked the group for their efforts and adjourned the meeting.

August meeting agenda (currently schedule for August 10th, but needing to be rescheduled):

- Update from the Hatchery Management Team
- Debrief prioritization and resolution path
- Prep for September Managers Forum meeting
- Round robin updates (at the end of the agenda).