

## **Guidelines for Dewatering and Fish Handling (Salvage) Plans**

Each Corps of Engineers mainstem project on the Columbia and Snake Rivers has dewatering and fish handling plans which cover the dewatering of various project facilities which may contain fish at the time of dewatering. The plans contain procedures for any handling or salvaging of fish within a facility or project area when it is dewatered. All dewatering and fish handling plans should be reviewed and revised where appropriate to reflect any new information and guidelines listed below. The plans shall be reviewed by the Fish Passage O&M Coordination Team.

**Coordination:** The dewatering and fish handling (salvage) plan for each project shall include coordination procedures for planned and emergency fish salvage activities. The project fishery biologist shall coordinate all fish salvage activities with project and District personnel.

**Fish Salvage Briefing:** The plans shall include a requirement that a fish salvage briefing for **all participants** involved in a dewatering activity be held prior to each dewatering activity. The briefings should lay out responsibilities for each participant in the dewatering activity. All emergency fish salvage operations will be coordinated and overseen by the project fishery biologist or fisheries staff if possible.

**Personnel:** The dewatering plans shall specify the number and specialization of personnel required for each type of dewatering activity. Personnel for fish salvage include the project fishery biologist, fisheries staff, crane operators, riggers, winch operators, forklift operators, and maintenance workers. To minimize fish stress and mortality, adequate personnel must be available for fish salvage activities.

**Facilities and Dewatering Procedures:** The salvage plans shall be project specific and shall contain step by step dewatering and fish salvaging procedures for all facilities and project features which may contain fish. The most common areas include adult fish ladders and collection channels, juvenile bypass systems, juvenile fish sampling facilities, turbines scroll cases and draft tubes, gatewell slots, and navigation locks. Individual projects may have other facilities or features that contain fish. The plans shall specify how the facility is to be dewatered and where and how fish are to be salvaged. Each project shall have designated release sites for the various types of fish expected to be encountered during each dewatering activity.

**Fish Handling Equipment:** The plans shall specify all fish handling equipment required for handling fish during each type of dewatering activity. Typical fish salvage equipment includes gloves, hand held fish nets, seines, fish buckets, gatewell dip baskets, and fish transportation tanks and vehicles. All equipment should be in good condition and pre-positioned before dewatering begins.

**Support Equipment:** The plans shall include a detailed listing of all support equipment required for each dewatering activity. This should include items such as hard-hats, boots, safety harnesses, flashlights, portable radios, ladders, cranes, man-baskets, pumps, forklifts, and any

other equipment required for a dewatering activity. The plans shall specify where equipment is required for use during a dewatering, where certain equipment should be pre-positioned before work begins, and the heavy equipment needed for fish salvage activities.

**Fish Safety Pools:** The fish salvage plans shall identify the areas in each facility which pond enough water to hold fish temporarily. The plan shall specify whether the safety pools are usually maintained by leakage or a controlled water flow. The plans shall specify how long and under what conditions each safety pool can be used to hold fish safely. If there is the potential for the safety pools to freeze over or lose their water source, the fish should be evacuated as soon as possible.

**Fish Handling Procedures/Practices:** The plans shall include procedures to minimize fish mortality and stress. The primary fish handling objective will be to collect and transport fish to release sites with minimal stress and without injury or mortality to any fish. Plans shall specify the details of all fish handling activities including how to crown and handle fish within each facility, specifics on the number of fish which can be hauled or transported in containers or transport tanks at varying water temperatures, and how and where to release fish at each project.

**Fish Handling Guidelines:** General fish handling guidelines which should be reflected in fish handling/salvage plans are detailed here. Adult salmonids and other large adult fish should be salvaged first. Netting of fish should be minimized whenever possible. Fish should not be crowded in the holding containers. Fish will be less stressed in larger containers (300 gallons or larger preferred), in colder water, and with supplemental oxygen or aeration. If fish are transported in warmer water (>65° F), fewer fish should be transported in a container and holding times should be shorter. All fish will be returned to the river as soon as possible at specified, predetermined release sites. Fish should not be held in holding tanks or containers for more than two hours under any circumstances. Fish should be released from the holding tanks into the river as soon as the fish salvage operation stops for any reason. Fish should be carefully released into the tailwater or forebay with a short vertical drop to the river. Fish release slides are desirable. The water temperature in the transport tank should be monitored. The water temperature in the transport or holding tanks will not be more than 2° F different from the river water. Fish should be removed prior to debris removal if possible.

**Fish Salvage Report:** The fish salvage plan should include a report form for the fish salvage operations. These forms should be completed for all fish salvage activities and kept permanently on file at each project.