

SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #2002-2

- *The following State and Federal Salmon Managers have participated in the preparation and support this SOR: Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and The National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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FROM: Ron Boyce, Chairperson, Salmon Managers

DATE: May 14, 2002

SUBJECT: Implementation of the NMFS Biological Opinion and adherence to established procedures.

SPECIFICATIONS:

- Implement the NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion spill levels.
- Follow the existing protocol to be used during a NW or SW Reliability Event.

JUSTIFICATION:

There is broad regional agreement among state, federal and tribal fish and wildlife management agencies that spill is the safest and most effective mitigation means to pass fish around hydroelectric projects on the Snake and Columbia rivers. A significant volume of spill passage studies provides the basis for this agreement.

Thus far in the 2002 spring migration period, migration flows have been far below the NMFS flow objectives. Analysis at John Day Dam in 2001 has shown that spill is effective in increasing juvenile fish survival even under low flow conditions. Meeting the NMFS Biological Opinion spill for fish passage levels is important under any flow conditions.

An emergency action list is part of existing TMT procedures. The intent of the list is to provide operators with a sequence of actions to take in the event that operators experience a Northwest or

a Southwest system reliability event. This sequence includes curtailing the implementation of Biological Opinion measures. The interruption of fish protection measures are well below other steps to be taken and should not be utilized as the first response mechanism.

On May 13 at 2000 hours, spill for fish passage was reduced below the NMFS Biological Opinion levels for one hour at John Day Dam to meet load due to a daily draft limitation at Grand Coulee Reservoir. These kinds of fluctuations in the system are not true emergencies and the interruption of Biological Opinion measures, particularly under the present environmental conditions, is not consistent with procedures in place.