

## **SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #2004-2**

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

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**FROM:** David A. Wills, Chairperson, Salmon Managers

**DATE:** March 30, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Implementation of Snake River Spill Operations and MOP.

### **SPECIFICATIONS:**

1. Implement spill at Lower Granite Dam as described in the 2000 Biological Opinion. Begin spill at Lower Granite Dam beginning at 1800 hours on April 3, 2004. It is anticipated that spill will then be phased in at the downriver projects at two-day intervals, initiating spill at Little Goose on April 5, at Lower Monumental on April 7 and at Ice Harbor Dam on April 9. (This two-day implementation interval may be modified pending collection of juvenile passage information at these downriver passage sites. The Salmon Managers will review the smolt monitoring data on the morning of April 5 and advise the COE at that time.)
2. Implement MOP operations beginning at Lower Granite Pool at MOP+1 on April 3 to coincide with the initiation of spill. MOP+1 operations are then to be implemented sequentially at Little Goose Reservoir on April 4, and Ice Harbor Reservoir on April 6, with MOP at Lower Monumental Reservoir beginning on April 5. (Note: It is CRITFC's policy desire to operate at MOP, as mentioned at TMT on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004, in order to be consistent with 2000 Biological Opinion operations.)

## **JUSTIFICATION:**

Spill is being requested in accordance with the NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion. According to the NMFS 2000 Biological Opinion 9.6.1.3.2 Action 40, "The Corps and BPA shall continue to implement voluntary spill at all three Snake River collector projects when seasonal average flows are projected to meet or exceed 85 kcfs." Further, 9.6.1.4.3 Action 54 specifies that the annual planning dates for spill for Snake River projects detailed in Table 9.6-3 are April 3 to June 20.

Chapter 9.6.1.2.1 explains that when the April final runoff volume at Lower Granite between April and July is 16 MAF the spring flow objective at Lower Granite Dam will be 85 kcfs. The March Mid Month Forecast at Lower Granite (April-July) is 18.2 MAF, which includes recorded precipitation through the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, assumes 90% average precipitation in the second half of the month and normal precipitation subsequent to the end of March. It is assumed that the April Final Water Supply Forecast will be well above 16 MAF at Lower Granite and flow objectives will be equal or greater than 85 kcfs. Hence, the Biological Opinion would project average seasonal flows to meet or exceed 85 kcfs, and voluntary spill would be implemented at the Lower Snake River projects.

In the first week of monitoring efforts at Lower Granite Dam, the yearling chinook numbers have increased from 70 to 430 fish per day. The unclipped proportion of the daily catch is approximately twice the clipped proportion. These numbers reflect what is occurring at the upriver sampling sites. At the Whitebird Trap the collection of juvenile chinook yearlings increased sharply, reaching 1,706 fish per day on March 24, 2004. The collection of wild yearling chinook also increased at the Imnaha Trap. Yearling chinook daily catch at the Grande Ronde Trap was significantly higher, ranging from 182 to 381 fish daily over a similar time period. All four trap sites have captured small numbers of steelhead since they went into operation this season, but catches are similarly increasing. The steelhead index at Lower Granite Dam has increased from 110 to over 930 in the first week of monitoring activities at this site. All of the passage index data indicates that the spring migration is underway in the Snake River for yearling wild and hatchery chinook and steelhead.

Smolt monitoring data indicates that the juvenile fish migration has begun. This objective of this request is to implement the intent of the fish passage measures in the Biological Opinion, implementing protection when fish passage occurs.

In addition to the upriver fish the Lyons Ferry Hatchery has started releasing listed spring chinook into the Tucannon River (170,000) and will begin releasing yearling fall chinook from the hatchery (450,000) on April 1. These fish are expected to be passing Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor dams shortly thereafter.

The MOP operations are requested to facilitate the passage of these fish through the Lower Snake River reach. This operation is to provide the fastest travel time possible at the present flows.