

## **SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #2005-8**

*The following State, Federal, and Tribal Salmon Managers have participated in the preparation and support this SOR: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Nez Perce Tribe, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.*

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

**DATE:** April 26, 2005

**SUBJECT:** Lower Columbia Flow Shaping

**SPECIFICATIONS:** Flat load flow through Lower Columbia projects as much as possible to improve fish passage conditions for migrating juvenile salmonids.

### **JUSTIFICATION:**

Over the past few days it has come to the attention of the Salmon Managers' that daily load factoring has resulted in decreasing amounts spill at some of the lower Columbia Rivers projects where spill is provided on a 12 hour, rather than a 24 hour basis. This results in spill levels that are much lower than expected. The Biological Opinion calls for project minimum flows through the powerhouse of 50 Kcfs at both McNary and John Day Dam. The Biological Opinion also calls for spill to the 120% gas cap (approximately 170 Kcfs) during nighttime hours at McNary Dam and 60% of flow to be passed at John Day Dam also during nighttime hours. The projects are at times being operated at much higher daytime flows, and decreased nighttime flows. This peaking operation, together with the project minimum of 50 Kcfs, has resulted in very low spill volumes (as low as 31 Kcfs with TDG averages of 111 to 112% in the tailrace) during spill hours at McNary Dam and as low as 46% of instantaneous flow at John Day Dam. These conditions do not provide as much protection as assumed in the Biological Opinion. In addition, the present situation at The Dalles Dam, where only spill gates one and two can be used

to modify spill in response to changing river conditions, suggests that spill volumes would best be achieved under flat loading of the project.

We understand that 2005 is a low flow year, and the possibility of achieving the Biological Opinion spill levels is compromised due to the requirement for project minimum operations. However, the extent of this inability to achieve the intent of the Biological Opinion is exacerbated by the present peaking operation of the river flow. Therefore, we request that the Action Agencies take all steps necessary to limit day/night flow fluctuations to assure safe passage of fish via spill protection levels as close as possible to those assumed in the Biological Opinion.