



FISH PASSAGE CENTER

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MEMORANDUM

TO: FPAC

FROM: Michele DeHart

DATE: March 24, 2009

RE: Fish Passage Operations 2009

On March 6, 2009 the federal parties agreed to “roll over” operations from past years for the Snake and Columbia rivers mainstem projects for fish passage. FPAC discussed various aspects of the “roll over” of operations at the March 24, 2009 meeting. The specifics of the “roll over” have not been provided for review or discussed in a draft Fish Operations Plan for 2009. The early fish migration is underway, and the Biological Opinion fish passage period is about to begin. The very short time frame remaining before the Biological Opinion fish migration period begins will not allow time for review, comment and modification of operations. The following is a summary of the FPAC discussion of specific aspects of “roll over” operations. These may not be the only operations that need to be considered in terms of the intent of the “roll over” operation to not reduce fish passage protection and survival from past recent years and that the “roll over” is not interpreted as an obstacle to improving fish survival.

Bonneville

Early operation of the corner collector

Early operation of the Bonneville Corner collector occurred in 2007 and 2008 for kelt studies, and was included in the 2008 operations plan. BPA considers operation of the corner collector

as a spill operation which starts on April 10 for the Lower Columbia River. The Corps of Engineers considered the early operation of the corner collector in 2007 and 2008, a study operation and therefore not valid to roll over as an operation in 2009.

- This COE position regarding roll over of a “study operation” of the corner collector as inappropriate is in stark conflict with their position on rolling over other operations.
- The COE rolled over the use of the Camas-Washougal gage from 2007 to 2008 and to 2009 as compliance point although the ODEQ and WDOE waivers no longer include this as a compliance obligation.
- In 2007 and 2008 the COE rolled over spill operations at Ice Harbor Dam that had been established as “study operations” even though studies were not continued.

McNary

The action agencies will “roll over” the 40% spill at McNary again although the agencies and tribes have unanimously recommended a test of 40% versus 60% or/and a test of 40% versus 50% at McNary. Available data indicates that the 40% spill at McNary will not meet performance standards for juvenile survival. Higher spill levels will provide a non-turbine passage route for juvenile lamprey decreasing mortality and impingement and will increase juvenile project survival.

Ice Harbor

The action agencies have continued to “roll over” the study spill operation at Ice Harbor of 30%-40% spill even though the study is not taking place. The rationale for this is that it is a literal interpretation of “roll over” from year to year. However, the data provided by the action agencies indicate that the 30%-40% spill level which continues to “roll over” results in lower fish survival then implementing the 45 kcfs daytime spill and gas cap night time spill at Ice Harbor.

Little Goose

There is general agreement that implementing night time gas cap spill at Little Goose Dam is likely the best operation for juvenile fish survival without impacting adult passage. The 14 days of nighttime gas cap spill at Little Goose Dam was included in 2007 and 2008 operations. Roll over of 2008 operations at Little Goose would include the 14 days of nighttime gas cap spill at Little Goose. The action agencies study of 30% spill 24 hours per day does not include the 14 day spill to the gas cap at night which has been included in past operations. Not only is the elimination of the 14 days of nighttime spill to the gas cap inconsistent with the “roll over” of operations from 2008, but eliminating two weeks of gas cap spill also eliminates the opportunity to consider the survival effects of gas cap spill versus 30% spill.