

Columbia River Treaty 2014/2024 Review
Sovereign Review Team
Thursday, June 9
12:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Spokane, WA

Meeting Report

SRT Members in Attendance

Taylor Aalvik, *Cowlitz Indian Tribe*
Scott Aikin, *Bureau of Indian Affairs*
Mark Bagdovitz, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*
Jim Barton (for Witt Anderson), *U.S. Army Corps of Engineer, NWD*
Debbie Bird, *National Park Service*
Joan Dukes, *State of Oregon*
Leif Horwitz, *U.S. Geological Survey*
Tom Karier, *State of Washington*
Brian Lipscomb, *Conf. Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Flathead Reservation*
Paul Lumley, *Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission*
Patrick McGrane, *U.S. Bureau of Reclamation*
Bruce Measure, *State of Montana*
D R Michel, *Upper Columbia United Tribes*
Steve Oliver, *Bonneville Power Administration*
Heather Ray, *Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation*
Mary Lou Soscia, *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*
Bruce Suzumoto, *National Marine Fisheries Service*
Jim Yost, *State of Idaho*

Significant Meeting Accomplishments

- The Sovereign Review Team made edits to, and approved, the *Study Purpose and Objectives*.
- The Sovereign Review Team approved the *Framework Questions*.

Reflections on Panel Session with Power Interests

SRT members commented that the morning session with power representatives had been helpful, and they agreed it is important to hold similar sessions for ecosystem and flood control interest groups. A member noted it would be helpful for the various interest groups to hear from one another in a joint meeting; Steve Oliver replied that those types of public meetings, as well as the focused panel discussions, would be held throughout the Treaty Review process.

Members summarized a few of the power panel points that were of particular interest to them. The Canadian Entitlement is obviously an issue of high concern and priority to utilities. Members had questions about the impacts of the Treaty on wind and other renewables; this was

another concern expressed by the panelists, and SRT members were curious to learn more about this. Members also wondered about the new CRT Power Group that has been formed, and hope to work with that group throughout the Treaty Review process.

Designated Representatives to the Sovereign Review Process

Members had questions about the nature of the designated representation to the sovereign review process. Concerns were expressed, with members noting that SRT meetings had originally been scheduled to be “closed door” sessions, open only to sovereigns.

In addition to the types of organizations allowed on the Sovereign Review Team and Sovereign Technical Team, members had questions about the type of staff support they could have available at the meetings.

Steve Oliver committed to the group that he would consult with Bonneville and Corps attorneys, and work with a small group of members to get the issue resolved.

SRT Ground Rules

Approval of the SRT ground rules had been on the agenda for approval, but the group determined it would be better to wait to approve these ground rules until after the designation situation has been resolved.

The ground rules will be edited to avoid duplication with the Sovereign Participation Process. Two members asked for a specific ground rule that emphasizes the importance of members working together with civility, noting that the designation discussion had included a tone and language that members felt was inappropriate. Margaret committed to creating this rule.

Panel Discussions for Ecosystem Function and Flood Control

July 28 in Portland had been suggested as a tentative date for panel sessions with both ecosystem function and flood control interests. Members asked to be polled regarding several alternative dates for this event, which Margaret will do.

Approval of Study Purpose and Objectives

The *Study Purpose and Objectives* had first been reviewed by the Sovereign Review Team at its May meeting. The Sovereign Technical Team had incorporated the SRT’s suggestions over the past month, and the Sovereign Review Team commented for the second time on the document at this meeting. After additional SRT suggestions were incorporated, the group gave unanimous “thumbs up” approval to the *Study Purpose and Objectives*. This decision is final and will not be revisited.

Members noted the importance of staying in close contact with the Sovereign Technical Team, especially as alternatives are developed and the modeling gets underway.

Approval of Framework Questions

A set of framework questions that set a broad parameter for the Treaty Review process had been worked on by a small group of SRT members over the past couple of months. The Sovereign Review Team first reviewed these questions on May 12. Additional changes had been made since

that time, and the SRT gave a “thumbs up” final approval to the Framework Questions at this meeting. This decision is final and will not be revisited.

Current High Water Conditions

Jim Barton addressed the current high water levels on the Columbia River and described the ways in which the Army Corps of Engineers is dealing with this situation. Water is being released from reservoirs now, in order to reserve space for the anticipated level of snow melt. Because the spring has been so cold, that melt has not yet occurred.

This was a preliminary presentation, with more detail to follow at the SRT meeting in July. SRT members asked Jim a number of questions:

Q: What we’re seeing today – is that similar to what maximum effective use might look like in the future?

A: Yes, I think it is similar to what you might see. We aren’t currently asking Canada to do anything for us that isn’t already included in the Treaty planning agreements. We don’t know how Canada might operate in the future, and how we might ask them to operate differently in the future.

Q: Is the high water doing any damage at The Dalles?

A: Yes, we are seeing some damage in low-lying roads, sidewalks, and agricultural areas. We’re also keeping a close watch on the levees to make sure they are okay.

Q: We’re not going to ask Canada to help us now with flooding, but if we were going to ask them to help, what would we ask them to do?

A: If this developed into a situation we thought we couldn’t manage on our own, we might ask Canada to perform some short-term releases in their reservoirs. The Treaty allows us to do this in a coordinated way with Canada; they provide us with 8.9 maf of storage. Without the Treaty we wouldn’t have this guarantee.

Q: What motivation does Canada have to move a lot of water (and lose energy value) in the spring? They aren’t going to want to give up this revenue.

A: Neither the U.S. or Canada wants to spill water unnecessarily. But of course that points to the importance of continued coordination, and the need to also understand the situation from both a power perspective and a flood control perspective.

Reference Operations

Matt Rea provided members with the “reference operations” chart that describes the current Treaty operating conditions with the Flood Control Operating Plan and compares them to a “no change” alternative that would assume that all current Treaty operations remain in place with the exception of a transition to a Called Upon flood control operation. A third column was left blank for suggestions from the SRT. This same chart will be used in the public listening session on June 10. Members had questions about the chart.

Q: What models will we use for this process, and do we have an ecosystem function model to use for the analysis?

A: We anticipate using the HydSim and ResSim models. We are currently looking at good ecosystem models, with COMPASS under consideration at this time.

Q: Why are you using the 2007 BPA White Book and not the 2011 White Book?

A: It's a consistency issue. The Phase I studies used AOP14 which incorporated loads and resources from the 2007 White Book. If we transition to using the most recent AOP for subsequent studies, we will certainly revisit the corresponding White Book.

Q: Why aren't you including non-treaty storage in the reference operations? This seemed like a particularly important issue for the utilities.

A: That agreement hasn't been officially signed yet, and we don't know if Canada will want to maintain the non-storage agreement if we don't renew the Treaty. It gives us a cleaner look at the impacts of Treaty operations if we leave it out of the base operating conditions. Once we have done the base modeling, we'll go back and take a look at how conditions change if we incorporate non-treaty storage into the modeling equation. We agree it's important, but it's not an element to include in the reference operating conditions.

Q: What about renewables and climate change?

A: Yes, both very important issues that will be incorporated and reviewed once we've completed the reference operations analysis. There's nothing related to climate change in either the current Treaty or the no action alternative, so this is a subject that the STT will need to rely on the guidance of experts to work on.

Q: Have you considered using the Power Council's forecast? Their 20-year plan is more sophisticated than the White Book.

A: Treaty planning has always used the BPA White Book to base its loads and resources on. Traditionally there have always been differences between the Council's forecast and BPA's White Book, but since we are projecting forward, we will try to use all sources of information available to make that projection.

Q: BPA has plans to expand its transmission capacity. Is that included in the modeling?

A: Current hydroregulation modeling does not include transmission variables, therefore, it won't be directly included in our hydroregulation modeling. However, it may be something we look at as part of our overall post-processing look at the data coming out of the hydroregulation modeling.

Q: It seems that this chart needs more columns, for example Treaty termination, Treaty renegotiation, etc.

A: Yes, this chart will eventually be expanded. This is just an initial look and it is primarily being used to prompt discussion.

Q: This shows no major changes to dams or reservoirs. As these get older and need to be repaired or replaced – where will those impacts be captured in the analysis?

A: We're not looking to add more storage at this point, but we are incorporating the estimated costs for making sure that the current reservoirs remain fully functional. Those costs will be included in our analysis; obviously we need to keep these facilities functional with or without the Treaty.

SRT members requested to be able to review materials prior to the materials being used for public discussion; it was noted that the Reference Operations chart was just being presented to the SRT, with the public discussion scheduled for the next day.

Objectives and Draft Strategies

Terry Buchholz presented to the Sovereign Review Team where the STT was in terms of the overall process and scope. She then described a number of potential strategies and ways to accomplish those strategies. The strategies had been tied to the hydropower, flood control, and ecosystem function objectives. The Sovereign Technical Team had developed the draft strategies and is looking for SRT input on those strategies. The next step is to start combining the strategies into alternatives.

After the alternatives have been defined, criteria will be developed by which to evaluate those alternatives. This will be followed by the modeling. The Sovereign Technical Team will be taking the lead in completing this work, presenting draft ideas, results, and conclusions to the SRT for final review, editing, and approval. The goal is to create a solid base of information and analysis for use in developing the regional recommendation regarding the future of the Treaty.

In response to SRT questions, Terry informed the group that there is time allowed in the schedule to adjust if the sovereigns have questions or concerns about the initial analysis. The current schedule allows for one major iteration or adjustment, with minor tweaks also anticipated.

Members commented that some of the strategies had an obvious Treaty nexus, while others do not have that nexus fully identified. The STT is working on defining the Treaty nexus for all of the proposed strategies. Also, the strategies presented today are the result of brainstorming on the part of the STT; these will be further culled and refined at upcoming STT meetings. The point of the brainstorming was to create a comprehensive list of all possible strategies that could be considered; some are outside the scope of the Treaty and will be edited out as the alternatives are developed.

There were questions about how and where fish habitat and survival numbers would be reviewed in the analysis. Terry responded that these would be built into the evaluation criteria, and commented that water quality, fish production, and fish production resources were just a few of the ecosystem-based functions that have been discussed by the STT.

A member noted that the morning power panel had brought up the delicate balance that has been struck in the BiOps process. Is there a check that will be done against those agreements? Terry responded that the BiOps are included in the reference operations.

Terry requested that SRT members provide any comments on the strategies to their Sovereign Technical Team counterparts. She asked them to prioritize the strategies and consider: 1) Which of the strategies best achieve the primary driving purpose objectives?; 2) Is the strategy within the context of the Treaty (Treaty nexus)?; and 3) Which strategies are not achievable?

The STT will be reviewing these strategies on June 16 and 17.

Next Meeting

The next Sovereign Review Team meeting will be July 14 in Missoula.