Regional Coordination Update

Roundtable Meeting Review

The June 11 Roundtable Meeting featured a presentation and discussion about the drawdown construction techniques of the lower Snake River dams to improve conditions for migrating salmon. Drawdown is one of the three pathways being considered by the study team.

This was the second in a series of roundtable meetings for those who wish to follow the study's progress, investigate its technical aspects, and discuss the featured topics with the study team.

Join Us for the Third Roundtable Meeting

When: *Wednesday, September 10, 1997, 1–4 p.m.*

Where: *Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division U.S. Customs House 220 NW 8th, Room 210 Portland, Ore.*

Featured Topics:

- *Surface bypass collection*
- *Juvenile salmon migration (see page 4)*

The public is welcome to attend.

Coordination Efforts

In cooperation with the Bonneville Power Administration, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Environmental Protection Agency, the Corps is working with the following groups to gather input and foster understanding:

- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Northwest Power Planning Council
- Native American tribes
- State agencies in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana
- Special interest groups.

As part of its regional coordination efforts, the Corps formed a technical study group called the Drawdown Regional Economic Workgroup. This group examines study issues from a variety of economic perspectives. Similar work groups, briefings, and meetings with interested parties are planned throughout the study process.

Feasibility Study Goals and Pathways

The ultimate goal of the study is to improve survival and recovery prospects for listed Snake River anadromous salmon stocks as they migrate downstream through the Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite Dams on the lower Snake River.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and the 1995 Biological Opinion issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Corps will gather public and interagency input to define and evaluate three courses of action (pathways) for improving juvenile salmon survival during migration through the hydropower system, and will provide a final recommendation to Congress in 1999. Congress will review the recommendations, allocate funding, and authorize a course of action.

Individual pathways and their alternatives will be discussed in each newsletter; see page 3 of this newsletter for a summary of the existing system. An overview of the three pathways under consideration is provided here:

Existing System

Ocean-going juvenile salmon pass the dams through turbines, fish bypass systems, or over the spillways. In accordance with the Biological Opinion issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Corps also implements flow augmentation and increased spill measures to assist migration. Screens are used to guide most fish away from turbines and into a bypass system. The young salmon are then routed back to the river or to a holding area for transport downriver by barge or truck. This system is constantly being evaluated and improved by scientists and engineers. Ongoing improvements include longer screens, additional barges, and flow deflectors on spillways.

Major System Improvements

These improvements would include construction of surface bypass collection systems (fish bypass systems that divert fish beginning at a more shallow level than current systems), fish guidance improvements, turbine modifications, structural changes to reduce harmful dissolved gas levels, and possible operational changes such as modifying river flows and spills. This could include improvements to the juvenile fish transportation system or in-river juvenile migration.

Natural River Drawdown

Existing reservoirs would be permanently lowered to a natural free-flowing condition by removing a section of each dam, creating a 140-mile free-flowing river. This would eliminate existing reservoir-related and dam passage mortality as well as speed the downriver migration of juvenile salmon. Commercial navigation and hydropower production would cease. Irrigation and recreation opportunities would be affected.