SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: 2004 C-7

TO:           Brigadier General W.T. Grisoli  COE-NWD
             William Branch       COE-NWD-NP-Water Management
             Cindy Henriksen, Rudd Turner  COE-NWD-NP-WM-RCC
             Witt Anderson        COE-NWD-CM-F (Fish Management Office)
             LTC. Edward Kertis, Jr.    COE-Walla Walla District
             LTC. Charles S. Markham    COE-Portland District
             J. William McDonald       USBR—Pacific Northwest Regional Director
             Steven Wright            BPA Administrator
             Greg Delwiche            BPA-PG-5
             Stan Speaks, Keith Hatch  BIA, Portland Area Office

FROM:          Olney Patt, Jr., Executive Director

DATE:          July 13th, 2004

SUBJECT:     Operation of the Lower Columbia Pools for the Summer 2004 Treaty Fishery

    The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, on behalf of its member tribes the Nez Perce Tribe,
    the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and the Confederated Tribes of
    the Warm Springs Reservation, requests the following reservoir operations in Zone 6 (Bonneville to
    McNary dams) during the 2004 summer Treaty fishery. Implement the following hydro-system operations
during the ceremonial, subsistence, and commercial Treaty fishery times as established by the tribes and the
Columbia River Compact.

    SPECIFICATIONS: Implement the following operations as a hard system constraint as follows:

    July 14th, 2004, 6 am, Wednesday, through 6 pm, July 17th, 2004, Saturday.

    Bonneville Pool: Operate the pool within 1.0 foot from full pool (msl elevation 76.5 – 75.5).
    The Dalles (Celilo) Pool: Operate the pool within 1.0 foot (msl elevation 159.5 - 158.5).
    John Day Pool: Operate the pool within 1.0 foot (msl elevation 264.5 - 263.5).
JUSTIFICATION:

The 2004 summer Treaty fishing season is of critical importance to CRITFC’s member tribes. The escapement of an estimated 96,400 adult summer Chinook and 124,700 sockeye will create harvest opportunities that tribal fishers have not realized in the last 40 years. If realized, this forecast will be among the top five counts at Bonneville dam since 1957. As of July 1st, 2004, there were 271 nets in the Zone 6 pools, as follows: 84 (31%) in Bonneville, 66 (24%) in The Dalles, and 122 (45%) in John Day. Fishers will be exercising their treaty rights by participating in this harvest. Many cultural and religious ceremonies and practices will occur with the harvest of these salmon.

During a meeting at CRITFC’s Law Enforcement Division in Hood River on September 2, 1999, tribal fishers explained the impacts of unstable pools and pools below full to the Treaty fishery to Colonel Mogren and Lt. Colonel Harshbarger. The tribal fishers explained that a pool fluctuation of 1.0 foot or more disrupts tribal fishery operations. Specific problems include: (1) increased local currents that sweep debris into fishing nets, (2) rapid 1-2 hour drops in water level will lead to entanglement of nets, (3) boat access problems, and (4) nets torn from their anchors. Nets and gear are costly to replace. Any delays or disruptions to tribal fishing operations caused by the excessive pool fluctuations in Zone 6 negatively impacts tribal incomes, food resources and cultural practices.

The fishers also stressed to Corps officials that the loss of fishing opportunity during the extremely limited treaty fishery cannot be replaced. Much of the tribal fishers’ income and food is generated during the brief treaty fishing season, thus, any delays or disruptions to their fishing operations caused by the excessive pool fluctuations in Zone 6 negatively impacts tribal incomes, food resources, and cultural practices.

Implementing this request will insure that the Federal operating agencies meet their federal trust responsibilities to the Columbia Basin treaty tribes. If this SOR cannot be accommodated, CRITFC’s member tribes request a detailed written response from the federal operators, with justification, by Friday, July 16th, 2004.