

Annual Progress Report

2022 Salmon Flow Augmentation Program and Other Activities Associated with NOAA Fisheries 2008 Biological Opinion and Incidental Take Statement for Operations and Maintenance of Bureau of Reclamation Projects in the Snake River Basin above Brownlee Reservoir

Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region

Mission Statements

The Department of the Interior conserves and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people, provides scientific and other information about natural resources and natural hazards to address societal challenges and create opportunities for the American people, and honors the Nation's trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities to help them prosper.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

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Introduction

On May 5, 2008, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) released a biological opinion (2008 Upper Snake BiOp) for the continued operation and maintenance of Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) projects in the Snake River Basin above Brownlee Reservoir, replacing the previous 2005 Upper Snake BiOp. In the 2008 Upper Snake BiOp, Reclamation committed to shifting flow augmentation releases to earlier in the migration season, when Snake River flows are more beneficial to anadromous fish listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The incidental take statement included Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) and associated terms and conditions to minimize incidental take to 13 stocks of listed salmon and steelhead, referred to as Evolutionarily Significant Units.

This document reports the status of activities related to the 2008 Incidental Take Statement, including Reclamation's salmon flow augmentation program (flow augmentation), status of new contracts, and coordination activities. This report meets Reclamation's responsibility to submit an annual progress report by December 31 of each year.

Flow augmentation releases in Water Year (WY) 2022 mark the 14th year of operations under the 2008 Upper Snake BiOp.

Reclamation's 2022 Salmon Flow Augmentation Program

Due to persistent dry conditions experienced this season, combined with low carryover storage, many reservoirs did not fill. Despite these challenging conditions, a flow augmentation volume of 376,893 acre-feet was secured in WY 2022 (Table 1). Since 2004, this has been the only year that Reclamation has not been able to provide at least 427,000 acre-feet, with many years in which Reclamation provided the larger volume objective of 487,000 acre-feet. Missing the benchmark of 427,000 acre-feet is noted in the 2008 Upper Snake BiOp given water supply conditions, availability of Anderson Ranch Reservoir and Palisades Reservoir powerhead space, and the ability of the water districts to rent water in drier years. Although too early to determine water supply and storage availability for flow augmentation in 2023, the lower carryover amounts in the Upper Snake River Basin may impact Reclamation's delivery of flow augmentation.

The water supply and operational conditions in 2022 are summarized below. The percent of average values used in this report have been calculated based on the new 30-year average of the 1991-to-2020 period.

Basin Conditions

At the beginning of the 2022 season, reservoir carryover storage was considerably below average in the Snake River Basin above Brownlee Reservoir. Carryover storage on November 1, 2021, was 83

percent of average in the Payette River basin, 72 percent of average in the Boise River basin, and 48 percent of average in the Upper Snake River Basin.

During the early-winter months of November through December, above-normal precipitation fell in most basins. After about mid-January, dry conditions began to dominate, and by March, snowpack was 85 percent of normal in the Payette River basin, 81 percent of normal in the Boise River basin, and 79 percent of normal in the Upper Snake River Basin. By April 15, the snowpack had declined to 79 percent of normal in the Payette River basin and 74 percent of normal in the Boise River basin, and increased slightly to 84 percent of normal in the Upper Snake River Basin. During May and June, most basins experienced cooler-than-average temperatures and above-average precipitation, which helped improve the water supply and increased the amount of water available for flow augmentation.

Observed unregulated runoff was reflective of the dry conditions experienced during the spring runoff period. The April-through-July unregulated runoff was only 85 percent of normal in the Payette River basin, 79 percent of normal in the Boise River basin, and 72 percent of normal in the Upper Snake River Basin. As a result of the dry conditions and below-normal runoff, flood risk management (FRM) operations were not required in the Upper Snake River Basin, and very little FRM occurred in the Boise and the Payette River basins during the spring runoff of 2022.

With dry conditions, the runoff was insufficient to completely fill the Boise and Upper Snake River basin reservoirs, but both reservoirs in the Payette River basin filled. The Payette River reservoir system reached a maximum storage content of 778,952 acre-feet, approximately 21,500 acre-feet below full capacity of 800,452 acre-feet, and would have filled completely but for early flow augmentation releases. The Boise River reservoir system reached a maximum storage content of 898,110 acre-feet, approximately 51,590 acre-feet below its full capacity of 949,700 acre-feet. The Upper Snake River reservoir system reached a maximum combined physical storage content of 2,691,089 acre-feet, approximately 1,494,606 acre-feet below full capacity of 4,185,695 acre-feet.

In eastern Oregon, the snowpack conditions were well below normal, dry soil conditions persisted, and no major spring rain events occurred. This resulted in below-normal runoff conditions in those basins as well.

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In-Season Management Considerations for Meeting Flow Augmentation Targets

Reclamation manages in-season storage releases for flow augmentation, relying on the best data available at the time in order to set release rates. Reclamation uses preliminary water rights accounting provided by the State of Idaho to estimate volumes available in storage accounts and amounts delivered. This preliminary accounting is provisional and subject to change at a later date, when data are finalized, and after-the-fact accounting is completed. Therefore, while it is difficult to deliver the precise targeted volume on a real-time basis, Reclamation strives to come as close as possible, with a typical margin of error of less than 1 percent.

Reclamation was able to provide 376,893 acre-feet of water for flow augmentation in 2022. Table 1 summarizes the source, amount, and timing for Reclamation's 2022 salmon flow augmentation program.

Table 1. Summary of Reclamation's 2022 Salmon Flow Augmentation Releases

Source	Amount (acre-feet)	Dates of Delivery		
Upper Snake above Milner Dam				
Reclamation Uncontracted Space	7	May 31-June 15		
Reclamation Powerhead Space	52,607			
Rentals – Attachment 1 Chart	0 ^A			
Subtotal	52,614			
Payette				
Reclamation Uncontracted Space	95,608	June 28-August 30		
Rentals	83,040			
Subtotal	178,648			
Boise				
Reclamation Uncontracted Space	40,932	June 14-August 8		
Reclamation Powerhead Space	26,550			
Rentals	500			
Subtotal	67,982			
Natural Flows				
IWRB Lease (Idaho)	60,000 ^B	April 3-August 31 ^C		
Skyline Farms (Oregon)	17,649			
Subtotal	77,649			
Total	376,893			

A The "Stipulated Augmentation Rental – Water District 01" Chart (see Attachment 1) specified Water District 01 would provide 0 acre-feet of flow augmentation rental.

Uncontracted Space and Space Reacquired for Flow Augmentation

Reclamation's 95,608 acre-feet of uncontracted space used for flow augmentation in the Payette River system fully refilled. In the Boise River system, Reclamation's 40,932 acre-feet of uncontracted space assigned to flow augmentation fully refilled. In the Upper Snake River above Milner Dam, only 7 acre-feet of uncontracted storage assigned to flow augmentation was allocated out of a total 22,895 acre-feet of space. The entire accrual to Reclamation's uncontracted space assigned to flow augmentation in the Payette, Boise, and Upper Snake River basins was used for flow augmentation.

^B See section titled "Lease of Natural Flow Water Rights Below Milner Dam."

^c The IWRB Lease of 60,000 acre-feet comprises 49,500 acre-feet estimated to occur within the April 3 to August 31 period, and 10,500 acre-feet estimated to occur before and after the migration period. See section titled "Lease of Natural Flow Water Rights Below Milner Dam" for further explanation.

The 17,649 acre-feet of natural flow rights Reclamation has acquired in Oregon (Skyline Farms) were fully available again in 2022.

Annual Rentals

Reclamation relies heavily each year on annual rentals from water users to acquire water for its flow augmentation program. Storage rentals in the Payette and Boise River basins are made available by willing sellers. With full reservoirs in the Payette River basin, a historically large volume of 83,100 acre-feet of rental water was made available and was a very important source of water for such a dry year. However, with drier conditions and less-than-full reservoirs in the Boise River basin, only 500 acre-feet of rental water was made available.

Water availability from the Water District 01 Rental Pool (Upper Snake above Milner Dam) is determined by a chart (Attachment 1) that considers carryover storage on November 1 and the April 1 runoff forecast for the Snake River at Heise (for the April-through-September period) to determine contributions to the rental pool for the flow augmentation program. Use of this chart was enacted after negotiation of the 2004 Nez Perce Water Rights Settlement and is fully consistent with Reclamation's description of its flow augmentation program in its 2004 and 2007 Upper Snake Biological Assessments.

In 2022, the Stipulated Augmentation Chart (Attachment 1) specified that Water District 01 would provide 0 acre-feet of rental water. Carryover from the 2021 water year on November 1, 2021, for purposes of the chart was low at only 847,247 acre-feet (49 percent of average), and the April 1 runoff forecast was 2,506,113 acre-feet (65 percent of average) for the April-through-September period. The 2022 April-through-September observed runoff was 2,806,153 acre-feet (73 percent of average).

Lease of Natural Flow Water Rights below Milner Dam

The Nez Perce Water Rights Settlement authorized the use of up to 60,000 acre-feet of Idaho natural flow rights downstream of Milner Dam for the purpose of flow augmentation. In better water years, this will increase the volume of water available for flow augmentation. In 2005, the Idaho Water Resources Board (IWRB) purchased approximately 98,000 acre-feet of water rights from the Bell Rapids Mutual Irrigation Company; this is water that served roughly 25,000 acres via high-lift pumps. Reclamation then entered into a 30-year lease with the State of Idaho for 60,000 acre-feet of this water for flow augmentation (IWRB Lease in Table 1).

Flow augmentation from natural flow rights downstream of Milner Dam occurs during the entire irrigation season, roughly April 1 to October 31. The IWRB Lease of 60,000 acre-feet comprises 49,500 acre-feet estimated to occur within the April 3 to August 31 period, and 10,500 acre-feet estimated to occur before and after the migration period. Even though these 10,500 acre-feet are delivered outside the April 3 to August 31 period, it provides an instream benefit and continued flow augmentation.

Powerhead Space

As part of the 2004 Nez Perce Water Rights Settlement, Reclamation may use powerhead space in Anderson Ranch and Palisades Reservoirs for flow augmentation. In order for powerhead space to be used, the sum from all other flow augmentation sources must be less than 427,000 acre-feet, and powerhead space cannot be used to exceed a flow augmentation total of 427,000 acre-feet. In addition, Palisades Reservoir powerhead space may only be used after all other flow augmentation sources have been exhausted, including Anderson Ranch Reservoir powerhead space.

With all other flow augmentation sources exhausted (Reclamation uncontracted space, rentals, and natural flows), water available for flow augmentation totaled 297,736 acre-feet. The entire Anderson Ranch powerhead allocation of 26,550 acre-feet (out of a total 36,956 acre-feet of space) was used to increase the flow augmentation amount to 324,286 acre-feet. To reach the 376,893 acre-feet total, the entire Palisades powerhead allocation of 52,607 acre-feet (out of a total 157,000 acre-feet of space) was used. Use of the remaining Palisades powerhead space was not without concern. Reclamation appreciates the interest and close coordination with Water District 01, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, NOAA Fisheries, and Nez Perce Tribal representatives. Reclamation considered whether this would impact water quality in the South Fork of the Snake River, and delivery was implemented in a way to minimize or mitigate impacts to water quality. Reclamation, in coordination with local stakeholders and the Henry's Fork Foundation, determined there were no sediment issues observed in the South Fork of the Snake River. Due to this year's use of powerhead space, carryover from the 2022 WY for both the Anderson Ranch powerhead account and Palisades powerhead account is zero.

Timing Considerations for Flow Augmentation Releases

The timing of flow augmentation releases depends on the individual basin and source of water. In the 2008 Upper Snake BiOp, Reclamation committed to shifting flow augmentation releases to earlier in the migration season when Snake River flows are more beneficial to Federally listed fish. The primary goals of the earlier flow augmentation releases are to minimize the amount of warmer water provided in August and to shift it into July or earlier. The opportunity and ability to shift flow augmentation will vary depending on the water year type, total flow augmentation volume available, and from which basin the flow augmentation originates. Consistent with the 2008 Upper Snake BiOp, not all flow augmentation can be shifted from August, particularly in the Payette River basin. The changes in flow augmentation release patterns for 2021 will be highlighted in the following discussion for each basin.

Reclamation made a concerted effort to provide early timing flow augmentation, including foregoing peak reservoir fill in the Payette River system and releasing flow augmentation at high rates. In addition, extensive coordination was conducted with the Technical Management Team (TMT) members (NOAA Fisheries, State of Idaho, and Nez Perce Tribe representatives) during the flow augmentation period.

As discussed in the previous sections, the 60,000 acre-feet of Idaho natural flow rights from the IWRB was provided for flow augmentation during the irrigation season, which ends on October 31.

To the extent possible, Reclamation will strive to benefit local resources when implementing its proposed actions while also meeting its obligations under the 2008 Upper Snake BiOp and corresponding incidental take statement.

Boise River Basin

Delivering water during this period in the Boise basin for flow augmentation relies on a combination of two strategies. First, in years with FRM operations when the system is assured to fill, some portion of the flow augmentation volume will be delivered by reserving an equivalent amount of system space that is not allowed to refill. In other words, as FRM operations near their end, releases are not reduced in order to fill the last remaining space; that vacant space is considered to have been delivered as flow augmentation instead.

The second strategy for shifting flow augmentation timing from the Boise River basin is to increase the rate of releases. This relies on the opportunity to make higher releases before the recreational floating season begins on the river. Floating season typically begins once stream flows through the City of Boise drop below 1,500 cubic feet per second (cfs), the weather warms up, the river is inspected and hazards removed, and Ada County officially opens the boat launch facilities. Once floating season begins, flows are limited to approximately 500 cfs above irrigation demand due to public safety concerns. Reclamation will look for opportunities to make higher releases; in years with FRM operations, this can be accomplished by maintaining higher releases rather than immediately ramping down at the end of FRM. In non-FRM years, it can likely be accomplished by releasing flow augmentation in May (or early June) before the floating season begins.

In 2022, flow augmentation releases began in the Boise River system on June 14 and lasted until August 8. In early June, a brief FRM operation occurred due to a large precipitation event when the lower two reservoirs (Arrowrock and Lucky Peak) were nearly full. This caused 4 days of FRM releases that were then transitioned into the release of flow augmentation. Even though the lower two reservoirs filled, the uppermost reservoir (Anderson Ranch) did not completely refill due to the low carryover and below-average runoff conditions above the reservoir. Releases of flow augmentation began on June 14 and averaged approximately 1,000 cfs above irrigation demand for the first 2 weeks. After this, flow augmentations releases were reduced to approximately 500 cfs above irrigation demand for public safety as people began to float the river in inner tubes and rafts due to warmer weather. Close coordination between Reclamation, Ada County, and the Boise Fire Department in June helped to deliver as much of the flow augmentation as early as possible before the public began recreating on the river. Flow augmentation was completed on August 8 after a total of 67,982 acre-feet was delivered.

Payette River Basin

Due to water quality concerns in Lake Cascade, some amount of flow augmentation water will continue to be released in August. Strategies for shifting the timing of flow augmentation from the Payette River basin include a combination of deliberately foregoing an amount of refill during years when the reservoirs would otherwise fill (similar to the Boise River basin strategy), and by increasing the initial rate of release in order to front-load a portion of the flow augmentation volume, primarily by holding higher releases following FRM operations.

Both strategies were employed in 2022. Flow augmentation releases from the Payette River system began on June 28 and ended on August 30. Inflows were sufficient to fill the reservoir system, but

refill was deliberately missed to allow for inflows to pass downstream for flow augmentation. FRM operations started at Deadwood Reservoir on June 23 and then transitioned to flow augmentation releases on July 3. FRM operations at Cascade Reservoir started on May 26 and then transitioned to flow augmentation releases on June 28. Releases at Cascade Reservoir were held higher initially to front-load the flow augmentation volume. The flow rate credited toward flow augmentation water was variable depending upon unregulated tributary runoff and irrigation demands, but averaged approximately 1,100 cfs in July and 1,200 cfs in August. Discharge from Lake Cascade averaged around 1,700 cfs during the flow augmentation period in the Payette River basin, less than the maximum powerhouse capacity of approximately 2,200 cfs.

Upper Snake River Basin

The strategy for flow augmentation releases in the Upper Snake River Basin is to increase flows past Milner Dam advantageous to downstream salmon and steelhead. The 2008 Upper Snake BiOp anticipated that flow augmentation releases can be provided in May or June in most average or lower water years, and by the end of July in most wet years. Flow augmentation releases in 2022 at Milner Dam commenced on May 31, ramping up to approximately 2,000 cfs through June 13, and then reduced to 0 cfs on June 15 to reach the total flow augmentation volume of 52,614 acre-feet.

Water leased or owned by Idaho Power Company started past Milner Dam on August 2 and ended on August 15, with an average flow rate of 1,350 cfs. The total volume of this water was approximately 37,412 acre-feet and was not counted toward Reclamation's flow augmentation volumes.

Mean Monthly Inflows to Brownlee Reservoir

The mean monthly inflows to Brownlee Reservoir from April to August are:1

April: 10,221 cfs
May: 14,691 cfs
June: 19,439 cfs
July: 8,239 cfs
August: 8,120 cfs

November 1 Carryover

At the end of the 2022 irrigation season (November 1, 2022), the carryover storage into the 2023 season was as follows:

Upper Snake above Milner Dam: 708,438 acre-feet² (41 percent of average)

¹Information about these data can be found at the website https://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/runoff/runoff_summary.php?date=10/01/2022

² This number reflects the actual November 1 carryover in the Upper Snake above Milner Dam. For purposes of determining the quantity of storage available for flow augmentation rental in 2023 from

- Boise River System: 419,617 acre-feet (117 percent of average)
- Payette River System: 439,787 acre-feet (93 percent of average)

Although too early to determine water supply and storage available for flow augmentation, the lower carryover amounts in the Upper Snake River Basin may impact Reclamation's delivery of flow augmentation in 2023.

Other Reasonable and Prudent Measures

In addition to submitting an annual report documenting salmon flow augmentation releases, NOAA Fisheries Service's incidental take statement contains two other RPMs and associated terms and conditions to ensure that Reclamation implements its salmon flow augmentation program, as described in its Upper Snake Biological Assessment (BA) and supporting documents.

New Contracts for Water Stored in Reclamation Projects

RPM 13.3.1 states:

"Because Reclamation's salmon flow augmentation program is heavily dependent on annual water rentals from Idaho's water rental pools, which are variable and insecure sources. Due to this variability Reclamation must consult with NOAA Fisheries prior to issuing a new contract that would reduce streamflows or reduce Reclamation's ability to meet salmon flow augmentation commitments, as described in its proposed actions, or whenever Reclamation otherwise determines that listed salmon or steelhead species or critical habitat may be affected."

NOAA Fisheries' intent is to ensure that any contract actions taken by Reclamation result in "an improvement or 'zero net impact' on Snake River flows and on Reclamation's ability to provide up to 487,000 acre-feet for salmon flow augmentation."

Reclamation committed in its March 2009 Decision Document to consult with NOAA Fisheries before entering into new, renewed, or supplemental contracts for storage water, if Reclamation determined that it would affect its ability to provide salmon flow augmentation water as described in the Upper Snake BA, or if it determined that listed species or critical habitat may be adversely affected.

In the past year, Reclamation has not entered into any new contracts for uncontracted space in any of the reservoirs covered in the Upper Snake BiOp. Further, Reclamation has not entered into any renewed or supplemental contracts for storage water that would result in reduced streamflows or affect Reclamation's ability to meet its salmon flow augmentation commitments.

the Water District 01 Rental Pool (Upper Snake above Milner Dam), 20,000 acre-feet will be added to actual carryover (totaling 728,438 acre-feet of calculated carryover) to mitigate against any impacts to flow augmentation reliability resulting from rentals for hydropower purposes that occurred in 2020 and have not yet refilled.

Reclamation, in partnership with the IWRB, proposes to raise Anderson Ranch Dam 6 feet. This raise would capture and store additional water when it is available. The proposal would create up to an additional 29,145 acre-feet of storage; an analysis of the additional storage and operations to fill this space indicate that Reclamation's flow augmentation deliveries would not be impacted. Formal ESA Section 7 consultation with NOAA Fisheries on the proposed action began November 9, 2020, was stopped to update project designs in March 2021, and will be restarted when updates have been completed.

Annual Coordination of the Salmon Flow Augmentation Program

RPM 13.3.2 states:

"Reclamation must continue to coordinate annually with the Technical Management Team (TMT) and Regional Forum when planning and implementing its annual salmon flow augmentation program." (NOAA Fisheries Service Upper Snake BiOp page 13-4)

Reclamation continued to coordinate with the TMT and Regional Forum when planning and implementing its 2022 annual salmon flow augmentation program. Reclamation staff regularly attended these meetings and provide estimates and updates of the salmon flow augmentation program acquisitions and delivery.

Attachment 1: Stipulated Augmentation Rental for Water District 01

November 1	Stipulated Augmentation Rental Water Dist 01 < April 1 - Sept 30 Heise Forecast 1000s af								
	<						. 5 070		
_	< 2,450	< 2,920		< 4,208		< 5,670	> 5,670		
0	0			0			185000		
100 200	0			0	150000		185000		
300	0			0	150000		185000		
400	0			0	150000 150000		185000 185000		
500	0			0	150000		185000		
600	0			60000	150000		185000		
700	0			60000	150000		185000		
800	0			60000	150000		185000		
900	0			60000	150000		185000		
1,000	0			60000	150000		185000		
1,100	0			60000	150000		185000		
1,200	0			60000	150000		185000		
1,300	0			60000	150000		185000		
1,400	0			60000			185000		
1,500	0		100000	150000	185000		185000		
1,600	0			150000	185000		185000		
1,700	0			150000	185000		185000		
1,800	0			150000			185000		
1,900	0	(100000	150000	185000		185000		
2,000	0			150000	185000		185000		
2,100	0	(100000	150000			205000		
2,200	0			150000			205000		
2,300	0	(100000	150000	205000	205000	205000		
2,400	0	(100000	150000	205000	205000	205000		
2,500	0	(100000	150000	205000	205000	205000		
2,600	0	(185000	185000	205000	205000	205000		
2,700	0	(185000	185000	205000	205000	205000		
2,800	0		185000	185000	205000	205000	205000		
2,900	0	(185000	185000	205000	205000	205000		
3,000	60000			185000			205000		
3,100	60000			185000	205000		205000		
3,200	100000			185000	205000		205000		
3,300	100000			185000	205000		205000		
3,400	100000			185000	205000		205000		
3,500	100000			185000	205000		205000		
3,600	100000	100000	185000	185000	205000	205000	205000		

Figure 1. Stipulated Augmentation Rental – Water District 01