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December 6, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee Members

FROM: Leslie Bach

SUBJECT: Briefing on the Columbia Basin Habitat Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

BACKGROUND:

Presenter: Jody Lando, Bonneville Power Administration and Leslie Bach, Northwest Power and Conservation Council

Summary: Jody and Leslie will provide an overview of the recent efforts to produce a research, monitoring and evaluation strategy for tributary habitat mitigation actions in the Columbia River Basin. They will provide a summary of the strategy development process, describe the intent and approach, and summarize the components of the strategy. They will also provide background on the Council's long-standing interest in and efforts on developing a regional habitat Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RM&E) strategy.

Relevance: This work focuses on implementing Council conditions and recommendations from 2013 for ensuring a cost-effective approach to tributary habitat monitoring and evaluation, as defined in Programmatic Issue #2 (i.e., Habitat effectiveness monitoring and evaluation) from the 2010-11 review of RME and AP Category of projects.

Workplan: Fish and Wildlife Division Workplan 2022; Program Performance:B.1, Continue to engage in and pursue regional habitat RM&E strategy development.

Background: For close to two decades the Council has been calling for a systematic, coordinated approach to habitat monitoring and evaluation across the Columbia Basin. In 2013 the Council requested that Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) provide a framework for habitat research and monitoring to support evaluation of the effectiveness of habitat projects. Although some products and updates were provided over the years, the analytical framework was never completed. In 2017 and 2018 staff reviewed existing tributary habitat RM&E efforts and held a series of webinars and workshops with regional fish and wildlife managers. Based on those meetings and discussions, Council staff developed a preliminary RM&E strategy.

As a follow-up to that initial effort, BPA, NOAA-Fisheries and the Council agreed to work together on developing an integrated habitat Research, Monitoring and Evaluation strategy to meet multiple basin needs. An initial draft was developed and sent to regional fish and wildlife managers, and a series of meetings were held around the region to further revise and refine the strategy. During that time, a number of entities suggested a revised process that included policy discussions as well as a reformulated technical team to develop the strategy.

During 2021 and 2022, a team consisting of technical experts from federal, state and tribal entities and the Council met approximately every two weeks to develop the Habitat RM&E strategy. The strategy is designed to provide guidance on tributary habitat monitoring and evaluation for restoration projects focused on salmon and steelhead. It describes a process for documenting the type and extent of habitat actions implemented, and an approach for monitoring and evaluating the information needed to detect and quantify the habitat change and biological response to those actions. The completed strategy is part of the action agencies' obligations under the 2020 Columbia River System Biological Opinion.

More Info: [Link to the Strategy](#)