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May 31, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council members

FROM: Karl Weist

SUBJECT: Presentation on Willamette Biological Opinion, Habitat and Floodplain Restoration

BACKGROUND:

Presenters: Dan Bell, Director of the Willamette Strategic Partnerships for the Bonneville Environmental Foundation and Andrew Dutterer, Partnerships Coordinator for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

Summary: In 2008, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service issued Biological Opinions to address ESA-listed populations of Oregon chub, bull trout, salmon and steelhead. The BiOps assigned downstream habitat actions as a responsibility to the Action Agencies. BPA teamed with the Willamette Strategic Investment Partnership, and now the Focused Investment Partnership, to leverage funding and work toward restoring floodplain function to anchor habitats in the mainstem Willamette River.

Relevance: Actions taken under the Willamette Biological Opinions address Council strategies articulated in the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program regarding anadromous fish mitigation in blocked areas. Specific habitat actions in the Willamette implement the Program's emerging priority 7 – "Continue efforts to improve floodplain habitats."

Background: The Willamette Valley Project consists of 13 federal dams developed to provide flood control, hydropower generation (power share purposes run from 23% at Cougar to 100% at Big Cliff), recreation, water quality, and irrigation benefits. Declines in populations of Willamette spring chinook and steelhead, along with resident bull trout and Oregon chub led to Endangered Species Act listings in 1993, 1998 and 1999. The 2008 Biological Opinion for the Willamette Basin Flood Control Project set forth a series of proposed actions and a Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) to mitigate for the effects of the Willamette Valley Project upon those listed fish populations. Based upon many of the proposed actions taken under the BiOp, the US Fish and Wildlife Service delisted Oregon chub on February 17, 2015. Oregon chub became the first delisted fish species due to recovery.

RPA 7.1.3 directed the Action Agencies (Bonneville and the Corps) to “complete at least two of the highest priority projects that should result in significant habitat improvement for listed fish species” by 2010. From 2011 until 2023, the final term of the BiOps, the agencies need to perform additional habitat actions. The RPA notes that some complex project might take several years to implement.

Bonneville, taking the lead role for the Action Agencies, created the Habitat Technical Team (HTT) to oversee the implementation of BiOp habitat actions. To help leverage funding, the HTT teamed with the existing Willamette Strategic Investment Partnership (SIP) between the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Meyer Memorial Trust. The SIP work concentrated on identified anchor habitats of the mainstem Willamette, sites deemed important for the restoration of floodplain function. The three funding partners have been able to work together to divide the monies between their various responsibilities for habitat restoration, monitoring and evaluation and planning. The funders shared and continue to share review processes and technical evaluations to determine funding priorities.

In 2016, OWEB switched from the Strategic Investment Partnership to a Focused Investment Partnership (FIP). The Willamette FIP maintained the same habitat priorities as its previous SIP incarnation, with the same funding partners, but with the FIP partners directing the state-funded actions.

Bonneville committed \$500,000 for the first two years of the HTT (FYs 2011 and 2012) and \$800,000 in subsequent fiscal years through the term of the Biological Opinion. Of that total commitment, \$50,000 funds OWEB administration of the HTT and \$50,000 helps monitoring and evaluation of habitat actions.

Since 2008, Meyer Memorial Trust has awarded more than \$13 million in funding for its 10-year Willamette Restoration Initiative. OWEB has agreed to commit over \$9 million for the next six years to fund the Willamette FIP.

More Info: Please see attached excerpt from the Umbrella Project Summary Report for 2017.

<https://www.salmonrecovery.gov/BiologicalOpinions/WillametteBiOp.aspx>

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fish_passage/willamette_opinion/

http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB/docs/FIP/FI_definition_solicitation_criteria.pdf