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October 3, 2017

### DECISION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council members

**FROM:** Patty O'Toole, Program Implementation Manager  
Tony Grover, Director, Fish and Wildlife Division

**SUBJECT:** Council decision on questions for ISAB review of 2014 Program

**PROPOSED ACTION:** Review and approve questions to the ISAB

**SIGNIFICANCE:** In September, the Council directed staff to develop questions to propose to the ISAB regarding their review of the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program. At the October Council meeting, staff draft questions and Committee recommendations will be reviewed with the members, along with options for posing the questions to the ISAB.

### BACKGROUND

At the September Council meeting, the Council approved a letter to the ISAB requesting that the ISAB initiate their review of the Council's 2014 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program (Program). The ISAB typically reviews the current Program as the Council prepares for the next Program amendment. The Council requested that staff develop detailed questions that address particular parts of the Program or key Program issues. Central and state staff have met and discussed the questions that are presented below.

### ANALYSIS

Seven questions are presented that cover an array of Program topics. An introduction provides context for the ISAB as the Council looks toward the next amendment process.

These questions will be reviewed with the Fish and Wildlife Committee at their October meeting and any changes they recommend will be presented to the Council.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Staff recommends that the questions be forwarded to the ISAB by Council staff. This could occur via email or during staff presentations to the ISAB or both. Staff will have the opportunity to meet with the ISAB to present the Program and questions in late October. Staff recommends this approach because there will be opportunity for additional dialogue about these questions and the issues they address.

Alternatively, the Council could decide to send the questions by way of a formal Council letter.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

See next page for staff-suggested questions and introductory text.

*Staff suggested questions, and introductory text (10/3/2017)*

With its September letter the Council indicated that it is an appropriate time for the ISAB to initiate their review of the Council's 2014 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program (Program). The Council looks forward to a review that will be informed by the various analyses and reports that have been completed by the ISAB and ISRP since the last Program was adopted by the Council.

The Council is considering an amendment process that would target a key set of issues and areas of implementation that need focused attention at this time. The Council observes that much of the current Program has been upheld in recent amendment processes with most of the change occurring in a few distinct areas. To focus on the Program areas that would benefit most from updated recommendations, the Council is considering specifically requesting recommendations to address specific Program related topics, for example: wildlife mitigation including accounting for losses and gains, the Program's investment strategy and priorities, data management and reporting, and general Program accountability. The Council will, however, respond to the all recommendations it receives in addition to key topic areas.

While the Program has increased steadily over the years in terms of the scale of implementation and amount of funding, some have recently expressed concern that financial uncertainties for Bonneville may result in reductions in Bonneville's investment in the direct program, at least for a period of time. The Council is interested in any guidance the ISAB can provide to help streamline and increase the effectiveness of the Program's implementation in protecting and mitigating for hydrosystem effects.

As the ISAB begins this review, the Council offers the following questions and information for the ISAB to consider during their review of the Program.

1. What changes should be made in the Program strategies and measures to ensure that past, current and future mitigation investments addressing hydro-system impacts perform as intended over-time in the face of existing and future threats, such as from non-native invasive species and climate change?
2. The Council and its partners are working on completing an extensive inventory of existing quantitative objectives, consisting of many different types and scales, for a subset of focal species and their habitat (see completed salmon and steelhead inventory on [Council's website](#)). What guidance can the ISAB provide for identifying the type and scale of objectives and related reporting indicators that are best suited for assessing and reporting on the Council Program?
3. The ISAB noted in their review of the 2009 Program that it did not appear to be on a trajectory to achieving the Program's basinwide objectives. Does the 2014 Program improve upon this? Is the 2014 Program a valid scientific basis from which to achieve basinwide Program objectives?

4. If life-cycle models can contribute to improving the Program and its implementation, what specific guidance can be provided in the Program to ensure that the appropriate models are developed to address specific Program needs?
5. Based on current scientific understanding, how can the Council strengthen the Program's Mainstem hydrosystem flow and passage operations strategy to improve juvenile and adult fish survival?
6. Based on current scientific understanding what further improvements in fish survival, productivity and capacity are possible through additional off site mitigation such as by investing in habitat improvement and artificial production actions in the tributary, mainstem and estuary, assuming no major changes in the mainstem hydrosystem infrastructure?
7. The 2014 Program encourages the region to consider the ISAB's recommendation to refine the Program's 2-6% SAR objective for different species and populations and some work has been done to compile existing SARs through the Coordinated Assessments effort ([see website](#)). What approach should be used to refine the Program's SAR objectives to better meet the Program needs for assessment and reporting?