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November 7, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council members
FROM: Lynn Palensky
SUBJECT: Research Project Review Process

BACKGROUND:

Presenter: Lynn Palensky

Summary: Staff will describe the first phases of a multi-phase process to review research conducted under the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. The Council's 2014 Program and 2017 [Research Plan](#) provides guidance for the staff to move forward with reviewing, organizing and prioritizing research funded under the Program. The Council's first step is to understand the body of research work that is currently being funded under the Program. In phase 1 staff will identify and categorize research funded under the Program (see Program section on [Adaptive Management](#)) that meet the definitions outlined in the 2017 Research Plan. In phase 2 Council staff will ask project sponsors to verify our research categorization. Phase 3 will include Council assessment and policy review of research as verified in phase 2. Details of step 3, Council policy review, will be determined after completion of the first two phases.

Staff will continue to update the committee on the projects or work elements of projects that are considered to meet the 2017 Research

Plan definitions as part of phase 1 and will seek Council feedback as we make progress.

Background: The last review of the Program-funded research work occurred in 2010-2011 as part of the Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation and Artificial Production Project Review. That review of nearly 160 projects included a number of stand-alone research projects (approximately 30), while most projects reviewed in that category included research elements mixed with monitoring, evaluation, assessment, or on-the-ground actions. The Council's 2011 [decision](#) on the approximately 30 research projects included funding recommendations for three years through 2014 (see Programmatic Issue #6). In addition the Council decision stated that further funding beyond three years was "*dependent on ISRP and Council review of "research results and a proposal for further work."* The project reports were to include reporting on hypotheses, conclusions reached, benefits to fish and wildlife, linkage for critical uncertainties, description of methodology and statistical analysis, timelines, milestones and end dates. This follow-up review of the 2011 research projects was postponed until after the 2017 Research Plan was finalized with the intent that the Plan would guide this subsequent review.

Analysis: The 2017 Research Plan is intended to be used to guide 1) projects that are exclusively research, 2) effectiveness monitoring projects, or 3) projects that contain research elements. For the initial inventory staff's goal is to capture all of the research in the Program as called for in the Research Plan, including research projects and research components of larger, multi-purpose projects. As staff work to develop the initial inventory, distinctions and definitions provided by the Research Plan will help to define the body of research work to be included in this process.

The Research Plan distinguishes between research and monitoring – two closely related elements in the Program. One of the greatest difficulties in identifying a discrete set of research projects is the overlap between monitoring and research. Projects that are entirely focused on addressing a research uncertainty, developing new tools, or assessing effectiveness should be considered research projects. For other projects the distinction is not as clear. These projects may have work elements that relate to research and effectiveness but research may not be the main purpose. In those cases, staff need to determine if these should be reviewed as research or under a different project review category.

Another challenge in determining if a project should be included in the research inventory involves distinguishing whether the research component is addressing a project development need versus having application at a regional scale. For example, an artificial production program that has a small research component that conducts research to improve that hatchery program versus one that is addressing a broad critical uncertainty. Typically research projects that address a critical uncertainty will be included in this review.

Following is a general plan for moving forward with the phases 1-3:

Phase 1

✓ **Compile the list of all research work in the program**

Working with central and state staff, and key Bonneville staff, staff will compile and refine the preliminary list of all research work in the program using project summaries, work elements, and the ISAB/ISRP's [Critical Uncertainties Report](#). An initial project inventory is nearly complete, and additional detail on individual projects will continue to be added over the next 1-3 months.

Phase 2

✓ **Validate the list with managers**

Share compiled and organized information with sponsors and ask for verification. This communication may include a request for additional information, depending on the particular topic area.

Phase 3

✓ **Council Policy Review**

Identify any policy or programmatic issues from the inventory. Assess current research and alignment with the Research Plan. If needed, engage the ISRP to assist with analysis of programmatic areas that would benefit from additional science consideration to better inform the Council's policy review step. Discuss options for next steps (e.g. focused science policy forums, deeper reviews, traditional review process, and solicitation for focused work).

✓ **Recommendations for next steps**

The Council, working with Bonneville will recommend next steps in the process to guide future research conducted under the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. This may involve different review paths for different topic areas.