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February 6, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee members

FROM: Lynn Palensky

SUBJECT: Update on Research Projects Review

BACKGROUND:

Presenter: Lynn Palensky

Summary: Staff will provide an update to the November 2017, briefing which outlined a multi-phase process to review research conducted under the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. Committee feedback and confirmation of process and timeline is appreciated.

In mid-December, Council staff developed a list of projects (inventory) with research elements that meet the definitions outlined in the 2017 Research Plan. By the February Council meeting, the draft research project inventory will have been sent to project sponsors and Bonneville RM&E staff for review and feedback (phase 2). This topic is also up for discussion at the February 12 Regional Coordination Meeting when we check in with the regional coordinators on the process.

Project sponsors will be asked to provide feedback on the inventory by March 23. At that point the Council will begin a Policy review to assess inventory and outline next steps (phase 3).

Background: The majority of Program-funded research was reviewed in 2010-2011 as part of the Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation and Artificial Production Project Review (RM&E/AP). That review did not include research

associated with resident fish or all habitat projects. For example, some research associated with resident fish and habitat projects was included in those particular category reviews. The RM&E/AP review of nearly 160 projects included a number of projects that were primarily research (approximately 30), while the remainder of the 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 the 2011 decision). In addition, the Council's 2011 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 follow-up review outlined in the 2011 decision postponed until after the 2017 Research Plan was finalized, with the intent that the Plan would guide any subsequent review.

With the 2017 [Research Plan](#) as a guide, the Council is moving forward on a review process, starting with an inventory of all research projects in the Program. The 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.

Therefore, the goal is to identify all of the research in the Program, including research projects and research components of larger, multi-purpose projects. As staff developed the initial inventory, distinctions and definitions provided by the Research Plan helped to define the research elements included in this process.

Attachment 1 provides relevant guidance for this effort from both the 2014 Program and the 2017 Research Plan.

Analysis:

The Council's Fish and Wildlife [Program](#) (see Program section on [Adaptive Management](#)) and 2017 [Research Plan](#) provides guidance for reviewing, organizing and prioritizing research funded under the Program. The staff proposes accomplishing this in a phased approach.

Phase 1 (*Complete*)

✓ Compile a draft list of all research work elements in the Program
Council central and state staff developed an initial inventory of research based on work elements, research plan and Program guidance, projects summaries in [cbfish.org](#) and the ISAB/ISRP's [Critical Uncertainties Report](#).

Phase 2 (*We are here*)

✓ Validate the list with projects sponsors

Staff will share compiled and organized information with sponsors and ask for feedback. The draft inventory will be available by the February Council meeting and Regional Coordination Forum. Council staff would appreciate feedback from sponsors by March 23, 2018.

Phase 3 (*April-May*)

✓ Council Policy Review

The Council will identify any policy or programmatic issues from the inventory and assess current research and alignment with the Research Plan. If needed, the Council will 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. Options for next steps (e.g. focused science policy forums, detailed reviews, traditional review process, and solicitation for focused work) will be discussed as necessary.

✓ Recommendations for next steps

The Council, using decision criteria described in the Program and in the Research Plan, and 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 and reviews will need to be considered in context with other category reviews.

Phase 4 (*new – late summer to early fall*)

- ✓ Launch proposal review for an agreed-upon subset of existing research projects (with opportunity for continued work, phased work or new work).
- ✓ Launch *possible* limited¹ solicitation for innovative or high priority research

¹ Limited funding, limited project duration, limited awards and specific timelines and objectives for innovative or high priority work.

Relevant 2014 Program and 2017 Research Plan Guidance for Research Review Process

Research plan guidance

The plan applies to 1) projects that are exclusively research, 2) effectiveness monitoring projects, and 3) projects that contain research elements.

- The purpose of the research plan is to help the Council, Bonneville, project sponsors and the independent science panels (*paraphrased*):
 - 1) improve organization of research and results reporting;
 - 2) organize critical uncertainties (*using 14 themes*)
 - 3) identify priority areas of current and future research;
 - 4) inform adaptive management; and
 - 5) guide funding recommendations.
- Periodic and less frequent science and policy reviews for Program research should occur to ensure projects are producing results and progressing toward addressing critical uncertainties.
- As described in the Program and further developed in the critical uncertainties report in Appendix A (figure 1), the risk-uncertainty assessment provides focused questions and context for the selection and evaluation of research projects. Answers to these and other important questions below will focus research programs on critical questions, produce conclusions that inform decisions and support a more cost-efficient research program.

2014 Program Language from the Adaptive Management Strategy: Research Principles

- All research projects must be consistent with the scientific method and appear likely to produce an outcome within a designated time frame.
- Research seeks to resolve critical uncertainties identified in the Council's research plan and assesses new methods and technologies to improve the Program.
 - *Program relevance* — address hypotheses relevant to management decisions, an underlying assumption of the program, and include expected effectiveness outcomes
 - *Legal relevance* — address the program's mandate to mitigate, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife affected by the hydrosystem
 - *Broad applicability* — result is likely to have widespread application
 - *Time required* — likely to generate conclusions in a reasonable amount of time that is generally considered to be three to five years
 - *Statistical validity*—yields statistically reliable results
 - *Focal species* —activities directed to focal species will be ranked higher
 - *Cost* – cost is commensurate with the value of the research. In the case of competing proposals, the least costly research that intends to produce the

same information will receive priority. The cost of the proposal to the hydropower system may also be considered.

- *Research projects will address hypotheses relevant to management decisions, with the results published in peer-reviewed scientific journals.*
- *Research efforts should consider potential impacts on and effects from other activities occurring in the same geographical area as the proposed research activity.*

2014 Program Language from the Adaptive Management Strategy: Research General Measures:

- Bonneville should ensure that all contracts for research projects, including those covered by funding agreements, identify an end date.
- An annual administrative check-in will provide an opportunity to ensure that all Program research projects have completed an updated research report based on the annual reporting template.