



**Independent Scientific Review Panel**  
for the Northwest Power & Conservation Council  
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**Memorandum (ISRP 2007-14)**

**October 2, 2007**

**To:** Tony Grover and Lynn Palensky, Northwest Power and Conservation Council

**From:** Susan Hanna, ISAB/IEAB, and Eric Loudenslager, ISRP

**Subject:** Input on Evaluation of Regional Coordination Projects

## **Background**

In response to the ISRP's recommendations for FY 2007-09 regional coordination proposals, the Bonneville Power Administration and regional coordination project sponsors have requested additional ISRP clarification and input on developing evaluation plans and associated metrics for regional coordination projects. The Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA), Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT), Kalispel Tribe, Spokane Tribe, and Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP) submitted regional coordination proposals. For your reference, the ISRP's FY 2007-09 final reviews for those proposals are attached below. The Council staff, project sponsors, and Bonneville hoped that ISRP representatives could meet with them to help develop appropriate metrics. This memo provides background on past ISRP reviews and points for discussion. As appropriate, please distribute to others involved in this discussion.

The ISRP recognizes that developing metrics for and conducting scientific reviews of coordination or administrative proposals is challenging, as evidenced by the ISRP's recommendation category for some of these proposals which was "administrative (see comments)." The ISRP also believes that different types of coordination and administrative proposals call for different reporting approaches. Basically, the ISRP has recommended that individual coordination proposals associated with specific watershed restoration or artificial production projects are more appropriately incorporated within their larger watershed or hatchery program proposals as work elements with line-item budgets. If this is not contractually possible, these proposals should at least be evaluated within the context of the larger watershed restoration program within which they reside. This consolidated reporting, evaluating the on-the-ground physical and biological results together, would help facilitate evaluation of coordination and administrative effectiveness.

In contrast, the set of regional coordination projects' tie to specific on-the-ground projects may be less direct, and thus evaluation requires a different approach. Often the success of

coordination cannot readily be tied to physical or biological metrics. For those instances when components of the regional coordination proposals can be tied to on-the-ground efforts, those connections should be made and results reported. However, significant elements of these projects, such as coordinating regional information dissemination and input on and implementation of the Fish and Wildlife Program, require different evaluation methods and metrics.

## **Performance Evaluation for Coordination Projects**

Evaluating the performance of coordination projects is conceptually the same as any other type of project. What is the goal of a coordination project? How will it contribute to the Fish and Wildlife Program? What are the specific objectives of the coordination project and the activities (tasks) that accompany those objectives? What metrics will be used to measure the contribution of activities toward meeting the project objectives? That is, what are the indicators of success?

The general purpose of project evaluation is to assess whether the project is achieving its goals and objectives and providing a good return on investment. In a project evaluation, project participants are seeking answers to the questions: How well are we doing? What works and what doesn't? To answer these questions requires an evaluation that assesses whether project activities have been conducted on schedule, produced the desired outputs, and achieved the desired outcomes. Whether a coordination project or a habitat restoration project, the general principles remain the same.

The need for project evaluation is not unique to the Fish and Wildlife Program, and guidance developed under other auspices can serve to assist in developing approaches for the coordination projects. As an example, Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993. The idea behind this statute is that federal agencies and projects are responsible for demonstrating that their activities produce the desired results. Agencies are required to specify how they will measure the performance of their program against accomplishment of their mission and goals. Two GAO reports on the GPRA provide descriptive examples of the legislative intent (GAO 1997; 2004). Program evaluations are a key component of demonstrating results.

Project performance is measured through a series of performance indicators, or metrics, that are developed in specific relation to project activities, objectives and goals. A performance indicator is defined in the GPRA as "a particular value or characteristic used to measure outcome or output."

Impact evaluations at the program level are typically extensive and conducted by experts in the field of program impact evaluation. A recent Fish and Wildlife Program example is the evaluation of the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program conducted by Hardner and Gullison (final report to be delivered to the Council in November 2007).

However, evaluating the impact of a coordination project need not be extensive or conducted by experts. Project managers can and should develop a set of performance metrics that relate to the

projects goals and objectives, these metrics should be identified in the proposal, and then used to measure progress toward meeting project performance targets. In fact, project managers are probably in the best position to know which metrics are measurable and are appropriate indicators of performance within the specific context (goals and objectives) of their projects. The point is that project participants determine the indicators (metrics) of success and how they can be measured, then develop a plan to measure and evaluate project success on the basis of these indicators (metrics).

A general conceptual framework for performance measurement provided by Teather and Montague (available at <http://pmn.net/library/PerformancemeasurementforS&Torgs.htm>) gives the general picture of the components of performance evaluation.

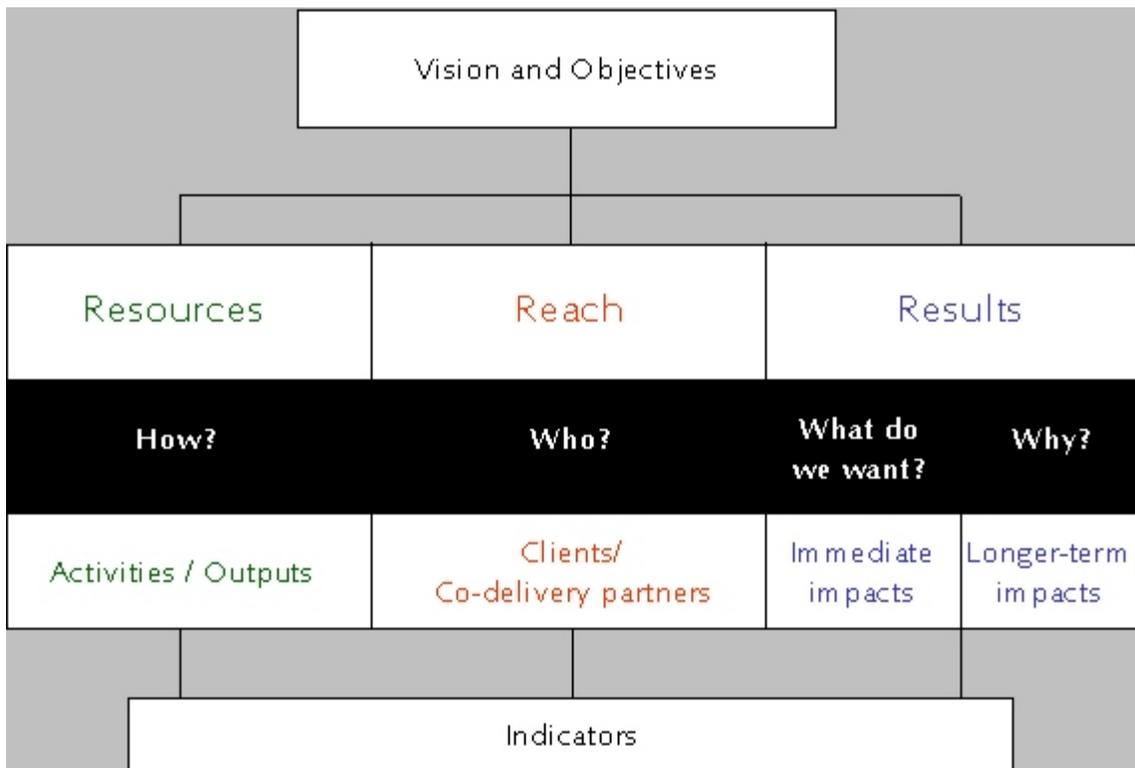


Figure 1. Performance Framework (Teather and Montague 1997).

Another government document providing guidance is a US Department of Energy handbook on measuring performance, available at [http://www.ornl.gov/pbm/handbook/handbook\\_all.pdf](http://www.ornl.gov/pbm/handbook/handbook_all.pdf).

All metrics derive from the goals, objectives, and activities of the particular project. Some ideas on potential metrics can be found in the ISRP and project sponsor review dialogue. The primary categories are metrics of output and metrics of impact. These are summarized as:

**Metrics of Output:** (e.g., are the proposed activities being accomplished?)

- numbers of meetings
- numbers of participants

- degree of representation among coordinated parties
- information exchange
- reporting

**Metrics of Impact: (e.g., how effective is the project: what is its added value of the coordination project)**

- changes in behavior
- value to the members
- user evaluation of product utility
- lack of redundancy
- member assessment of effectiveness and impact
- benefits to fish and wildlife of enhanced coordination activities.
  - Specific projects or resources benefited by the project
  - Specific effect of coordination on conservation and management

## **Attachment - Excerpts from the ISRP's Final Review of FY 2007-09 Proposals (ISRP 2006-6)**

### **Recommendation Categories**

**4. Administrative** was assigned to coordination proposals that were not amenable to scientific review but needed to be grouped with other projects that required scientific review. The proposals should have clarified how they related to on-the-ground projects. Such proposals were theoretically reviewable, but most did not provide adequate details on coordination procedures or plans for implementation. There was a need to clearly define successful outcomes for these projects to allow for an evaluation of their efforts. Atypical proposals, such as developing a Subbasin Plan in a subbasin currently lacking one, might also be categorized as "Administrative" in that they require a policy decision from the Council to determine their eligibility for funding.

### **Regional Coordination**

198906201 - Annual Work Plan CBFWA

**Sponsor:** Columbia Basin Fish & Wildlife Authority (CBFWA)

**Province:** Mainstem/ Systemwide **Subbasin:** Systemwide

**Budgets:** FY07: \$2,253,787 FY08: \$2,253,787 FY09: \$2,253,787

**Short description:** Coordinate fish and wildlife manager participation in regional mitigation activities for implementation of the NPCC's Program including RM&E, project and program review, subbasin plan implementation, program amendment recommendations, etc.

**ISRP final recommendation:** Fundable (Qualified)

**Comment (from response loop):**

The response includes a detailed description of the types of coordination and facilitation services that CBFWA is or could be providing. It adds information that was missing from the proposal regarding the operational meaning of general coordination terms. The response states that without CBFWA, the BPA, NPCC and the ISRP would find it difficult to staff activities such as holding meetings and providing website services. In addition, the response states that the "Columbia River Basin is dependent on the coordination, administration, and technical services that the CBFWA provides" for two monitoring and evaluation coordination partnerships (PNAMP and CSMEP). CBFWA activities in this regard include subcontracting services, participation in meetings, and website services. In 2005 CBFWA began to further expand its role to data inventory and reporting services. The response further states that the CBFWA role extends beyond coordination of its members to services for non-member entities.

Overall, a better demonstration is needed that CBFWA's services are provided in the most cost-effective manner. The response provides a better description of the association of the \$900k budget line to the "annual report", including good detail on the range of products associated with the report. However, questions remain as to whether the costs are reasonable, especially given that a template of the website is already up and running.

The response also provides a description of the withdrawal of the Kalispel and Spokane tribes from membership. It appears that the interests of these two entities were not being addressed at the policy level; however, little explanation is provided as to why this situation exists. Does CBFWA have mechanisms to cope with "under-represented" groups?

The description of performance metrics is useful. As the sponsors indicate, existing performance metrics measure output (e.g. number of meetings, number of participants) but not impact (changes in behavior, value to the members). The table of number of meetings is interesting, particularly the very low number of PNAMP meetings (n=1) relative to other kinds of meeting such as "member meetings." However, evaluating performance on the basis of the number of meetings held, average number of participants, and reports produced is not, as the sponsors acknowledge, sufficient to assess impacts.

As recommended by ISRP, the sponsors conducted a literature review of metrics to assess coordination effectiveness. Review results were not provided but apparently were not considered applicable: "Results from coordination-oriented literature searches provide a broad set of techniques and metrics that are not consistent for coordination efforts, a situation that is comparable to differences that exist among monitoring and evaluation efforts for physical and biological projects."

Regardless of the range of approaches, the ISRP maintains that coordination efforts such as these can be evaluated. The response provides a vigorous defense of the need for the CBFWA, asserting that more coordination will result in better survival and recovery of fish and wildlife populations. However, no quantitative measures are developed for determining the degree to which this is the case. The Status of the Resource Project should provide useful information on key variables such as escapements, but the response does not give much information on project status or data QA/QC. Will Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife agencies rely on the Project for data or will the project duplicate agency data?

The recommended qualification to funding is that the project should develop an approach to monitor its impact in terms of changes in behavior and value to the members. In addition to the PISCES metrics, it would be useful to have CBFWA develop member-feedback instruments to evaluate member assessment of effectiveness and impact. In addition, the new cluster of products included under the Status of the Resource report provides an opportunity for user evaluation of product utility.

## 200710800 - Regional Coordination for Upper Columbia United Tribes

**Sponsor:** Upper Columbia United Tribes

**Province:** Mainstem/ Systemwide **Subbasin:** Systemwide

**Budgets:** FY07: \$69,594 FY08: \$73,346 FY09: \$80,053

**Short description:** Facilitate and coordinate five UCUT member Tribes' participation in regional activities involving implementation of the FWP, annual project and funding recommendations, rolling provincial review, subbasin planning, program amendment recommendations, etc.

**ISRP final recommendation:** Admin (see comments)

**Comment (from June 1 report):**

This proposal describes coordination and information provision for the Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT) that seems quite useful and productive. A brief but clear section describes the role of the UCUT in coordinating its five member tribes with the Fish and Wildlife Program and with CBFWA. It describes meetings coordinated and information provided to its members, as well as its function in communicating UCUT member positions within the Basin decision arenas.

The proposal provides specific examples of UCUT's role in enabling coordination, communication and participation of its members in regional processes. It makes a good case for the relation of UCUT coordination support to the participation of the upriver tribes in fish and wildlife activities. It describes decreasing levels of UCUT funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), relates the funding declines to a decline in coordination activities, and states that project funding is necessary to maintain UCUT central office functions.

The proposal would be strengthened by including more detail on the benefits to fish and wildlife of enhanced coordination activities. For example, what specific projects or resources are threatened if funding is not provided? How will conservation and management be affected if the funding is not provided?

The proposal has five objectives describing various aspects of coordination, participation, and long-term planning. Work elements are listed for each objective; all are activities that facilitate member tribes' participation in the Fish and Wildlife Program. Work elements are specific and relate well to the objectives. One set of work elements relates to the informing of and involvement in national legislation and international agreements that affect the tribes with regard to salmon and habitat issues and treaty storage water. This seems quite useful and forward-looking.

To strengthen the justification for the proposal, the sponsors should provide specific information on the basis for the following statement made in the proposal: "The upriver Tribes have been innovative leaders in proposing strategies for watershed-based Program management, equitable allocation of fish and wildlife funding, and multiple-purpose river operations."

In addition, because the objective of this project is coordination, the sponsors need to provide some measures by which the effectiveness of this coordination can be monitored and evaluated.

**200710600 - Spokane Tribe Fish and Wildlife Planning and Coordination**

**Sponsor:** Spokane Tribe

**Province:** Mainstem/ Systemwide **Subbasin:** Systemwide

**Budgets:** FY07: \$93,100 FY08: \$93,100 FY09: \$93,100

**Short description:** To ensure adequate Spokane Tribal representation at regional meetings. This project would secure funding for Spokane Tribal Fish and Wildlife Managers to attend regional and provincial meeting to assist in development of work plans within Columbia River.

**ISRP final recommendation:** Admin (see comments)

**Comment (from June 1 report):**

This is an inadequately written proposal to perform coordination and meeting participation. The proposal provides little explanation of how the requested FTE support and other funds will be

spent. Budget figures are rounded and seem excessive (e.g. .7 FTE for coordination; \$10,000 to attend regional meetings). The proposal does not justify why the efforts described in this proposal, which would seem to be routine and to require minimal effort, are not a component of the four ongoing Spokane projects, or how conservation and management will be affected if the funding is not provided.

This proposal and a twin proposal submitted by the Kalispel Tribe would seem to be covered under the more comprehensive (and less expensive) UCUT coordination proposal, which includes the Spokane and Kalispel.

The justification for the proposal is based in the need for regional cooperation, the MOU between BPA and the Upper Columbia United Tribes regarding consultation, coordination and participation, and the withdrawal of the Spokane Tribe from CBFWA. The proposal does not provide specific explanation of the Tribe's withdrawal from CBFWA.

The proposal has a single objective of regional coordination, explained as being necessary for Spokane implementation of the Fish and Wildlife Program. Four work elements are generally explained as participation in meetings, exchanging information, providing Spokane information to regional reporting, and providing information to regional entities on Spokane policies, programs, and projects. Coordination is not specifically tied to improvements of fish and wildlife conservation and restoration on Spokane lands.

## 200716200 - Kalispel Tribe Fish and Wildlife Coordination

**Sponsor:** Kalispel Tribe

**Province:** Mainstem/ Systemwide **Subbasin:** Systemwide

**Budgets:** FY07: \$90,000 FY08: \$93,100 FY09: \$96,200

**Short description:** Participate in regional mitigation activities in implementation of the Fish and Wildlife Program and BPA's role in funding the Fish and Wildlife Program.

**ISRP final recommendation:** Admin (see comments)

### **Comment (from June 1 report):**

This is an inadequately written proposal to perform coordination and meeting participation. The proposal provides little explanation of how the requested FTE support and other funds will be spent. Budget figures are rounded and seem excessive (e.g. .7 FTE for coordination; \$10,000 to attend regional meetings). The proposal does not justify why the efforts described in this proposal, which would seem to be routine and to require minimal effort, are not a component of the eight funded Kalispel projects, or how conservation and management will be affected if the funding is not provided.

This proposal and a twin proposal submitted by the Spokane Tribe would seem to be covered under the more comprehensive (and less expensive) UCUT coordination proposal, which includes the Spokane and Kalispel.

The justification for the proposal is based in the need for regional cooperation, the MOU between BPA and the Upper Columbia United Tribes regarding consultation, coordination and

participation, and the withdrawal of the Kalispel Tribe from CBFWA. The proposal does not provide specific explanation of the Tribe's withdrawal from CBFWA.

The proposal has a single objective of coordinating the Kalispel tribe fish and wildlife projects with the region. Four work elements are generally explained as participation in meetings, exchanging information, providing Kalispel information to regional reporting, and providing information to regional entities on Kalispel policies, programs and projects. Coordination is not specifically tied to improvements of fish and wildlife conservation and restoration on Kalispel lands.

#### 199803100 - Implement Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit

**Sponsor:** Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)

**Province:** Mainstem/ Systemwide **Subbasin:** Systemwide

**Budgets:** FY07: \$234,205 FY08: \$234,205 FY09: \$234,205

**Short description:** This project will provide effective and efficient watershed restoration through coordination and support of tribal restoration planning and project implementation consistent with Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit and the NWPCF Fish and Wildlife Program.

**ISRP final recommendation:** Fundable (Qualified)

#### **Comment (from response loop):**

CRITFC provided helpful answers to many ISRP comments. The response concerning outreach was well done. The list of over 150 completed or ongoing projects is impressive. However, no lists of technical reports or data resulting from these projects could be provided because of the "limited time frame." It is surprising that CRITFC does not routinely have this information available.

Better evaluation and documentation of the effectiveness of previous coordination efforts and project implementation in the form of feedback from the four Tribes and other agencies could help CRITFC to identify those activities that have been most effective and to prioritize future efforts. But overall, the response misses the point and does not address the ISRP's comments on the need for better self-evaluation and monitoring of CRITFC activities.

The statement: "It is impossible to clearly state what the most effective activities are" is disconcerting in a coordination project, and can only be true if no attempts to evaluate effectiveness are made. Approval of projects by the CRITFC Commission does not constitute an evaluation. The sponsors need to take a more proactive approach to learn how to conduct an effectiveness evaluation and to conduct it. At present, effectiveness is asserted rather than documented. Responses #12 and 16 address some potential indicators of effectiveness, but these remain assertions rather than demonstrations of effectiveness.

If it is the case (response #12) that "Effectiveness may well be measured by the success of preserving the tribal institutional capacity and leadership to deliver on-the-ground projects, collaboration to make shared decisions with state and federal co-managers on key policy issues, participation in forums that shape future actions by BPA and other federal entities that oversee the operation of the hydrosystem, and education and outreach to build and sustain partnerships,"

the elements of this statement provide guidance as to the types of indicators that would be appropriate to assess performance.

Response 17 also addresses the effectiveness evaluation issue. Stating, "As already agreed to by the ISRP, monitoring of coordination effectiveness is difficult to evaluate quantitatively" is again missing the point. Although it is difficult, it is both desirable and possible. The point is that careful thought should be given to what effectiveness would look like and how it can be measured, then develop a plan to measure it and evaluate it. Agreeing to "document any incidences of overlap or redundancy with CRITFC and individual tribal projects if they occur as a measure of effectiveness" is not sufficient and does not address the central question of effectiveness.

The response provides no indication of a prioritized approach to planning. Planning is apparently entirely reactive to short-term priorities expressed by CRITFC members. Response 15 describes some of the elements of consideration in coordination but does not explain the process of prioritization.

The recommended qualification to funding is that the sponsors be required to develop an effectiveness evaluation plan.

#### 200400200 - PNAMP Funding

**Sponsor:** US Geological Survey (USGS) - Cook

**Province:** Mainstem/ Systemwide **Subbasin:** Systemwide

**Budgets:** FY07: \$50,000 FY08: \$50,000 FY09: \$50,000

**Short description:** PNAMP requires a Coordinator to serve as lead staff, liaison, point of contact, and support efforts to coordinate state, federal, and tribal monitoring efforts in the region. This proposal requests funding for a portion of total cost of Coordination only.

**ISRP final recommendation:** Fundable

**Comment (from June 1 report):**

This is a well-written proposal to fund a coordinator for PNAMP. It appears to be a very cost-effective project performing a necessary and valuable function for PNAMP. The largest PNAMP costs are covered in-kind by six partner agencies, but a coordinator is needed. Twenty entities are signatories to the PNAMP charter. The background section makes a convincing case for why a coordinator is needed and how it will contribute to PNAMP objectives.

The PNAMP aquatic monitoring efforts are tied to the Fish and Wildlife Program, BiOps, recovery plans and subbasin plans. The proposal extensively documents relationships to ongoing and proposed projects. A figure illustrates 14 monitoring programs being coordinated. Two detailed tables provide excellent comparisons and differentiations among three large monitoring programs (PNAMP, CSMEP, and FRMEP) and among regional data projects (PNAMP, NED, CSMAP, PNW RGIC, StreamNet, PNWQDX).

PNAMP was formed in 2004. A project history focuses on accomplishments in the ensuing two years. PNAMP appears to be making good contributions to the region's monitoring coordination, having facilitated numerous meetings and information exchanges about monitoring protocols. To assess the effectiveness of this facilitation an audit or poll of participating agencies should be

conducted within 2 years. Adaptive management and course corrections within the PNAMP framework could be realized if direct feedback from the participating agencies were obtained. The proposal would be improved by documentation of this feedback as well as by a better description of whether a particular model of coordination is being used.

Biological objectives are brief but appropriate. Two are quite qualitative ("help advance" and "provide guidance") and would be improved by greater specificity. The project would be improved by giving more thought about how it would establish performance metrics for itself; for example, what method would be used to measure facilitation success?

The PNAMP facilitator has a daunting task, and it is not clear from the proposal if objectives are being reached. The proposal would be improved by a more detailed description of key coordination protocols and incentives, such as the role of the coordinator in peer review of PNAMP products and the consequences for a signatory to PNAMP of not adhering to Charter principles (e.g. what are the incentives for compliance?)

The proposal would also be improved by more background on the events, problems and crises that stimulated the creation of PNAMP. Was there evidence of decreasing quality or quantity of RME in the Columbia Basin? A table of acronyms would also be helpful.