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December 2, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Brian Allee

SUBJECT: Fish and Wildlife Research Plan Update

Introduction

The establishment of a regional or basin-wide plan for research was described in the Council's 2000 Fish and Wildlife Program. This document articulates the need for identification of key research uncertainties, the identification of major research topics and a determination of priorities for funding. In addition, it calls for:

1. Coordination with the mainstem plan and subbasin plans
2. Ensuring input from independent scientific review, fish and wildlife agencies and tribes, independent scientists and other interested parties in the region.

The ISRP reviewed a Council staff draft research plan in April 2002. One important recommendation from this review suggested that the development of a long-term research plan could be facilitated by a retreat with members of the ISRP, ISAB and IEAB organized to identify key critical research uncertainties and prioritize them. All three groups have agreed to participate in a research retreat that is presently scheduled for February 25th through the 27th at the Council offices.

Some time ago, an ad hoc group of Council members composed of Dr. Tom Karier, Mr. Jim Kempton and Mr. John Hines reviewed a draft outline authored by Dr. Karier proposing an approach to advance a research plan for 2004. What follows are the essential elements of the plan.

Research Plan Purpose

It is proposed that the purpose of a research plan is three fold:

1. Provide direction and accountability for an annual expenditure of research funds.
2. Set general and specific funding priorities for BPA funded research.
3. Provide a regional context for the research funding by identifying and prioritizing critical research uncertainties, which will be useful in the rolling provincial review process and in the determination of innovative projects.

Fiscal Year 2001 Research Agenda

The Fiscal Year 2001 research agenda happened more in response to project solicitations based upon prior Council Fish and Wildlife Programs, FCRPS Biological Opinions and other documents rather than from an explicit research plan. Council staff, sorting FY2001 research projects by major categories of research and by research question produced the FY2001 research agenda. This is extremely useful in terms of establishing a baseline rating of how research funds are presently being allocated. For example, Table 1 provides an indication of how funds are allocated by broad categories of research for FY 2001. Figure 1 gives a visual representation of the allocation by categories. It is clear from these funding allocations that of the total available funds (\$48.9 million), the majority of funds are directed at anadromous fish (\$33.9 million) and within this category most funds are allocated to artificial propagation (\$17.9 million). It should be noted that these funds are from the Bonneville Power Administration “direct funded” category only. It should be noted that the mainstem category has a larger amount of research dollars allocated to it than the direct fund due to the fact that the Corps of Engineers research budget is roughly \$30 million for the “reimbursable funded” category.

The insights from studying the distribution of research funding by category can also be useful in evaluating the priority of research projects from the current Fiscal Year 2003 mainstem and system-wide project review.

2004 Research Plan

The adoption of the Council’s 2000 Fish and Wildlife Program provides an opportunity to initiate a process to identify and prioritize key research uncertainties and potentially redirect the allocation of research funds. The Council from a policy perspective has an interest in emphasizing research in the following areas:

1. Mainstem operations to include spill, flow augmentation and fish barging.
2. Maintain research on the rearing and spawning habitat but emphasize quantification of benefits from riparian protection, improved screening and increased seasonal water flows.

3. Provide for an increased emphasis on the estuary and near shore ocean habitats.
4. Maintain research projects evaluating new approaches to harvest, such as, selective harvest practices.

Process for Development of the 2004 Research Plan

The Council suggests a collaborative process for developing a research plan for FY2004. A draft outline of a proposed approach is as follows:

1. Council discussion of the Fish and Wildlife Research Plan Update with comments on the process and potential for new categories of research categories - **12/02**
2. Independent science and economic groups (ISRP, ISAB and IEAB) propose and prioritize key research uncertainties within research categories - **2/03**
3. Columbia Basin tribes, fish and wildlife state and federal agencies review and provide comments on prioritized research uncertainties - **3/03**
4. NOAA Fisheries and USFWS review of implementation of BiOp research priorities - **3/03**
5. Review recommended prioritized list of key uncertainties with the Council - **4/03**
6. Bonneville review and comment on research plan - **5/03**
7. Provide an opportunity for independent scientists and other interested parties in the region to review the FY 2004 research plan - **5/03**
8. Council decision on regional allocation of research by category and on final FY2004 research plan, which will provide the context for 2nd Round of the Provincial Project Review - **6/03**

Regional Research Review

The Council will seek to provide regional accountability for the research effort in the Columbia Basin by sponsoring an annual research review. This conference would serve to assess the "State of the Science" in key areas by highlighting research accomplishments, to measure progress toward answering the questions in the research plan, and to revise the plan with new questions and new priorities. It is proposed that the first conference will review the scientific basis of the ocean regime shift and implications for Columbia Basin salmon populations. The conference would be held in Portland in May or June, 2003. The conference deliverables will be a published proceedings.