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CHAIR
Idaho

Jim Kempton
Idaho

Gene Derfler
Oregon

Melinda S. Eden
Oregon

NORTHWEST POWER PLANNING COUNCIL

851 S.W. SIXTH AVENUE, SUITE 1100
PORTLAND, OREGON 97204-1348

TOM KARIER
VICE-CHAIR
Washington

Frank L. Cassidy Jr.
"Larry"
Washington

Ed Bartlett
Montana

John Hines
Montana

Fax:
503-820-2370

Phone:
503-222-5161
1-800-452-5161

Internet:
www.nwcouncil.org

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee

FROM: Steve Waste, Manager, Program Analysis and Evaluation

SUBJECT: Results and Implications of the ISRP Review of Revised M&E Proposals from the Mainstem/Systemwide Provincial Review

Action

This memo provides an update on monitoring and evaluation issues. The results of the ISRP's review of revised monitoring and evaluation proposals from the Mainstem/Systemwide Provincial review are reported, and the follow-up actions proposed by Bonneville and NMFS are described. Bonneville may still seek a decision from Council to approve expedited funding for a select set of monitoring and evaluation projects in the Mainstem/Systemwide Provincial Review, including one revised proposal, but no written request has been received.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that Bonneville, working with NMFS, take the following actions on the four revised monitoring and evaluation proposals that were not recommend for funding by the ISRP on March 24, 2003. For project proposals 35016 (baseline land-use) and 35024 (pollutant effects monitoring), Bonneville should follow the ISRP recommendation to use targeted solicitations to address these needs. For project proposal 35020 (action effectiveness) and 35048 (data management) we recommend that Bonneville and NMFS rework these proposals to directly address the stated concerns of the ISRP, prior to their resubmission.
2. We recommend that the Action Agencies revise the Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Plan to address concerns raised in the ISRP reviews and relevant issues in the ISAB "Review of Strategies for Recovering Tributary Habitat" and submit it for ISAB review as soon as possible.

Background

The Council recognizes the importance of a regional monitoring and evaluation program that will integrate new federal efforts with the ongoing programs of the states and tribes. In its

comments on the Action Agencies Endangered Species Act Implementation Plan, the Council recommended that federal efforts utilize subbasin planning as a vehicle for such integration. Council support for the long-range, expensive, and anadromous fish focused program required by the FCRPS BiOp is contingent upon: strong scientific underpinnings; coordination with the States and Tribes; and shared responsibility for funding.

In February, the Fish and Wildlife Committee supported expedited review of monitoring and evaluation projects in the Mainstem/Systemwide Provincial Review critical to the check-in requirements of National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) 2000 Biological Opinion (BiOp) on the Operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). These projects were previously recommended as fundable by the ISRP, or received urgent recommendations from CBFWA, or core recommendations from NMFS and BPA.

In March, the ISRP reviewed five other revised proposals from the Mainstem/Systemwide Provincial Review that were modified to address additional research, monitoring, and evaluation requirements under the FCRPS BiOp. The revised proposals included one database related proposal (35048), three-action effectiveness related proposals (35016, 35019, 35020), and one pollutant/water quality related proposal (35024). All the proposals were sponsored by NOAA Fisheries' Northwest Fisheries Science Center. The ISRP found only one the proposals to be fundable, "Develop and Implement An Integrated Subbasin-scale Status and Watershed-scale Effectiveness Monitoring Program for Salmonid Populations and Habitat (350190)."

The initial reaction of Bonneville and NMFS to the ISRP's comments has been very responsive. Bonneville and NMFS are developing a letter to Council that will request ISAB review of the Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that is being updated to include results of CBFWA proposal coordination, more direct connection to the gap proposals, and address recent ISRP comments and ISAB monitoring recommendations. The letter will note some of the recommendations on monitoring in the ISAB Review of Strategies for Recovering Tributary Habitat that concur with the approach of the Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Finally, it will request the ISRP to review and make recommendations on the issue of moving current un-programmed and scattered project level monitoring and evaluation costs into a proposed programmatic approach within a structured monitoring and evaluation budget. Bonneville is developing a separate letter to Council on the issue of the appearance of conflict of interest.

Despite the difficulties attendant to launching a viable monitoring and evaluation program, the ISRP noted that they were "pleased to have a role in this regional effort to establish a scientifically sound, cost-effective, and long-term RME plan for the Columbia River Basin which is an endeavor of paramount importance."

Analysis

Revise Proposals - In regards to the four revised proposals that the ISRP found to be "not fundable," they stated that "they were not technically justified and did not make a convincing case that they will satisfy- the requirements in the BiOp RPAs." The ISRP recommended, "that a national, targeted solicitation would be appropriate for the monitoring gaps that proposals 35016 (baseline land-use conditions with remote sensing monitoring) and 35024 (pollutant

effects monitoring) intend to meet.” For 35016 and 35024, Bonneville should follow the ISRP recommendation to use targeted solicitations to address these needs.

Revise Proposals to Link with the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan - The ISRP noted “the revised proposals do not demonstrate or describe a well-coordinated effort toward the development of a systematic and thorough approach to RM&E.” Therefore, it would be especially helpful to the ISRP if clear links were established between the objectives identified in the Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and the tasks within the project proposals. We recommend taking the time necessary to revise the project proposals so that they squarely address the concerns expressed by the ISRP. These projects are the building blocks of the program, and therefore must be sound. ISRP concerns should be addressed through revisions in the language of the proposals, not just through a cover letter or memo.

Revise Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Prior to ISAB Review - It is important to note that the ISRP conducted its review of the revised proposals without a formal review of the Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. The Action Agencies were planning to provide this plan to the ISAB for review at the end of March. In light of the ISRP’s response to the revised proposals, we recommend that the Action Agencies reexamine the Federal Plan to ensure that it addresses previously expressed ISRP concerns prior to review by the ISAB, and adequate context for subsequent ISRP reviews of monitoring and evaluation proposals. The Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Plan should be provided for ISAB review as soon as possible.

Use Current Projects - The ISRP also recommended the use of currently implemented projects, and that the Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Workgroup should review what is already underway in the basin, identify opportunities to utilize and modify existing projects to meet gaps, instill consistency, avoid redundancy, and thus work towards developing an efficient and cost-effective Monitoring and Evaluation Program. The ISRP noted that the Monitoring and Evaluation Workgroup had done this to some extent. Completion of this exercise may reveal significant opportunities to save time and money.

Attachment 1. Review of Revised Mainstem Systemwide Proposals for Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation. ISRP 2003-6. March 24, 2003.