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December 2, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee

FROM: Doug Marker, Bruce Suzumoto and Mark Fritsch

SUBJECT: Mainstem implementation activities

The mainstem implementation workgroups have continued to meet. The following is a brief summary of their most recent activities and other developments regarding implementation of the Council's mainstem amendments:

- The regional federal executives met on November 24 and discussed the Council's request to inform the Council on which summer spill test alternative will be implemented in 2004. They also discussed the issue of changing Libby and Hungry Horse summer reservoir operations. No decision was made on either issue. A decision may be made sometime after the federal executives' meetings on December 12 and December 16. A letter is being drafted by the federal executives and will be sent to the Council to explain their position.
- The summer spill science group continues to discuss possible study designs for the various alternatives. A major problem with implementing a summer spill test is that the survival of juvenile fall chinook through the hydrosystem is not well understood. Current summer spill operations are based on the knowledge that exists, but in reality there is very little actual survival data for juvenile fall chinook. Several members of the science group believe that a baseline survival level must be established for fall chinook before a spill reduction test can occur. Establishment of such a baseline may take several years of study. An alternative approach could be to use adaptive management as a way to clarify scientific uncertainties. Using the best available scientific information as a guide, reductions in summer spill could be implemented and survival results monitored and evaluated over time. This would be an experimental approach using the spill reductions as a means to clarify uncertainties about summer spill.

Numerous other issues including type of test fish, the test period, number of tags required, study logistics, performance measures, level of precision and costs have been discussed. There are concerns that many of the experiments being discussed may not be practical or produce information that will be helpful in making a decision on summer spill. The science group will meet again December 3. The science group is attempting to complete viable study designs for each alternative prior to the December Council meeting.

- The spill offset committee met on November 5th and 26th to develop and discuss guiding principles and potential offset measures. Considerable time has been spent discussing the intent of the offset measures and the species of interest. Draft principles and measures were presented to the Fish and Wildlife Committee last month. Currently, the spill offset committee is drafting a description for each of the currently defined offset measures and creating a matrix that demonstrates the consistency of the potential offset measures with the current principles. It is hoped that this exercise will be completed in the near future and passed on to science group for their review.
- Discussions on Hungry Horse and Libby reservoir operations are underway but have not been on the same track as summer spill discussions. It appears that resident fish studies can be undertaken in 2004 with a relatively small amount research funding. It is also possible that fall chinook studies could be applied to changes in both spill and reservoir operations. Further discussions are planned on this issue.
- Further discussions on summer spill and reservoir operations will take place at the mainstem implementation meeting on December 4.