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November 9, 2004

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Fish and Wildlife Committee and Council Members

**FROM:** John Ogan and Lynn Palensky

**SUBJECT:** Update on Subbasin Plan Adoption

**ACTION REQUESTED:** There are no actions requested. This is an update.

The Council released 29 subbasin plan recommendations as draft amendments to its fish and wildlife program at its October meeting. Further, the Council directed staff to solicit public comments on that set of plans, and to also solicit comments on a set of broader issues. On October 18<sup>th</sup> a letter requesting comments on the 29 subbasin plan recommendations was broadly distributed, and on October 22<sup>nd</sup> a second letter requesting comment on the broader issues was released. Both letters invite comment through November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Copies of both letters can be viewed on the Council's website at <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning/>.

Very few comments have been submitted as of this writing. However, staff is aware that there are entities considering the issues presented in the letters, and that it is likely that written comments will be provided. We perceive (at this time anyway) more interest in dialogue and developing comments on the issues outlined in the October 22<sup>nd</sup> letter than on individual subbasin plan drafts. We have met with the Regional Coordinating Group, CRITFC, and the fish and wildlife managers of its member tribes. Initial feedback, generally stated, is that people appreciate that the Council has identified these important issues, that they are the right matters to be engaging at this time, and that this comment process is a useful vehicle to give structure to the discussion. We will provide more detail to the Council during our discussion of this item on the substance of what we are hearing in our discussions with others.

The staff intends to continue and expand its discussions on the issues presented for public comment with interested parties throughout the region. If there is a general belief among those we have consulted with that additional comment time would be beneficial, staff may recommend that the Council extend the comment period beyond November 22. However, the staff does not believe that we have to adjust the schedule at this time.

Public hearings required by the Act are being conducted as of this writing and will be finished after the meeting in Coeur d' Alene.

With regard to the second set of subbasin plan recommendations (the blue group), work is underway to make the improvements specified by the Council staff to address adoptability deficiencies. Those work products are due to the Council on November 26<sup>th</sup>. The staff will convene to review those responses the following week, with that review yielding recommendations to the Council on the adoptability of this second set of plans. Several of the subbasin plans in the third group may also be being revised, and may be able to work into the review process on the same schedule of the second group of plans. Again, the current schedule has the Council considering this set of plans as draft amendments at its December meeting.

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