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December 7, 2004

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Mark Fritsch

**SUBJECT:** Confirmation of project scope - *Lower Columbia River Ecosystem Monitoring and Data Management*, Project 2003-007-00

### Action

On September 9, 2004 the Council received from the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership the habitat element of the monitoring plan associated with *Lower Columbia River Ecosystem Monitoring and Data Management*, Project 2003-007-00. This submittal is intended to address the remaining condition placed on the project as part of the Council decision made on June 9, 2004. On November 18, 2004 the ISRP completed its review of the submittal (ISRP document 2004-16). At your meeting on December 13 - 16, Council staff will present an overview of the ISRP findings and a staff recommendation addressing the condition placed on this project.

### Recommendation

Council staff recommends that the Council confirm that the conditions placed on this project, as part of the Lower Columbia and Estuary provincial review, has been fully addressed and that the most recent review has demonstrated that the habitat monitoring element of the project is appropriate for contracting by the Bonneville Power Administration. The approved Fiscal Year 2005 budget for this project includes the funding for this project element.

### Background

On March 30, 2004 the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership submitted to Council a response to address the condition that was placed on *Lower Columbia River Ecosystem Monitoring and Data Management*, Project 2003-007-00, as part of the Council Project Funding

Recommendations for Fiscal Years 2002 through 2004 for projects in the Lower Columbia and Estuary provinces<sup>1</sup>.

The Lower Columbia River Ecosystem Monitoring and Data Management Project was proposed during the Lower Columbia/Estuary Provincial Review as startup for habitat monitoring, water quality monitoring with a toxics assessment, and data management. The ISRP (ISRP document 2002-2) gave it a fundable recommendation, with conditions on the data and the monitoring plan. The Council concurred with the ISRP's data management recommendation and, given the Council's ongoing data management initiative, recommended not funding the proposal's data tasks. On September 11, 2002 the Council recommended funding of the rest of the proposed project, conditioned on satisfying ISRP concerns regarding the development and review of a more comprehensive monitoring plan<sup>2</sup>.

On May 6, 2004 the ISRP completed its review of the submittal (ISRP document 2004-9). The ISRP determined that the Water Quality Monitoring section of the plan was fundable with some additional detail, but did not recommend funding for the Habitat Monitoring section.

The ISRP indicated that the water quality monitoring section was fundable subject to a more detailed documentation of the sampling protocols (location, time, and methods). Council staff felt that the additional detailed description of the sampling protocols (e.g. sample design and collection methods) could be incorporated as part of the Bonneville contracting process. The sponsor provided the additional sampling protocol information on May 14, 2004 that gave additional detail and clarity to the issues raised by the ISRP.

In review of the habitat-monitoring section of the plan, however, the ISRP stated that the submittal was not a vast improvement to the original proposal, continued to be too vague and general to be reviewed for scientific merit and recommended that this section of the project not be funded. As with the water quality element the sponsors, as part of the information submitted on May 14<sup>th</sup>, also provided additional information regarding the habitat-monitoring plan.

On May 21, 2004 Council staff met with the sponsors and discussed the options for the project with regard to the original conditional funding recommendation. At that time, staff learned that due to changes in staff at Bonneville and the Estuary Partnership and through a lack of clarity from the Council regarding the Lower Columbia/Estuary Review, the project sponsor and Bonneville/Council had prematurely submitted the monitoring plan sections of a Statement of Work to the ISRP for review. That Statement of Work was not intended to serve as the detail for ISRP review. In fact, one of the tasks in the Statement of Work was to develop a habitat monitoring plan for future review. LCREP staff noted that the plan could be developed by early fall for submission to ISRP and they also intended to coordinate with the Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP) in development of the estuary habitat monitoring plan.

During this meeting, staff outlined that it was possible to permit the implementation of the water quality monitoring section of the plan, with the understanding that the details requested by the

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<sup>1</sup> Recommended at FY '03 \$260,000, FY '04 \$800,000 and FY '05 \$625,000. The original recommendation was realigned for one season as part of FY 2004 start-of-year planning budget (i.e., FY 2005 @ \$800,000).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/province/cascade/2003finalrec.pdf> - Columbia Estuary Issue 3, page 14.

ISRP be addressed as part of contracting. Staff then recommended that the habitat monitoring section be resubmitted for an additional ISRP and Council review prior to implementation. On June 9, 2004 the Council concurred with the staff recommendation and further conditioned this recommendation by stating that the habitat monitoring implementation be postponed until a future favorable ISRP and Council review.

On September 2, 2004 the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership submitted the “Columbia Estuary Habitat Monitoring Plan” intended to address the conditions placed upon the project by the Council in June. The purpose of the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership’s habitat monitoring plan is to provide a detailed, statistically valid sampling plan for status and trends monitoring of salmon habitats.

On November 18, 2004 the Council received the ISRP review of the habitat monitoring plan. The ISRP found the monitoring plan was a significant improvement over the previous draft reviewed (ISRP document 2004-9) and stated that it is a “logical, scientifically sound procedure for establishing a monitoring program in the Columbia River estuary and as such is fundable”. In addition, the ISRP indicated the concerns raised in the previous review were addressed and provided additional comments on how to improve the plan. The comments focused on the lack of detail on the on the classification scheme, sampling design, habitat performance indicators, and methods of analysis. The ISRP also stated their concern over the lack of monitoring fish distribution and abundance.

### **Analysis**

Based on the ISRP recommendation and additional input from the sponsor and Bonneville Council staff believes that the conditions place on this project as part of the provincial review has been fully addressed and the habitat monitoring element of the project be recommended for contracting.<sup>3</sup> Additional detail provided by the sponsor and supported by Bonneville (i.e., reviewed and approved) demonstrated that that the additional comments that the ISRP raised have been acknowledged and are being incorporated into the monitoring plan. In regards to the ISRP’s concerns over the lack of fish monitoring, staff noted that fish monitoring was an original element of the proposal, but due to budgetary constraints at the time of the Lower Columbia/Estuary Provincial Review, was removed from the proposal to fit within the Lower Columbia/Estuary budget. Council staff suggests that if coordination with ongoing research is not adequate for the fish monitoring element of the project, that the sponsor seek additional monitoring funding for this element as part of a future solicitation and review.

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<sup>3</sup> The budget associated with the habitat monitoring is currently part of the approved Fiscal Year 2005 budget. This is year two of the funded activities associated with the project.