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February 8, 2005

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, Project Implementation Manager

SUBJECT: Step review for *Re-introduction of Lower Columbia River Chum Salmon into Duncan Creek*, Project #2001-053-00.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Council staff recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee confirm that the conditions placed on this project, as part of the Lower Columbia and Estuary province review, have been fully addressed.

SIGNIFICANCE:

On September 11, 2002, as part of the Lower Columbia and Estuary province review, the Council recommended that the funds associated with the artificial production tasks and the related monitoring and evaluation tasks not be funded. Funds for these project elements were conditioned upon a favorable step review.

On October 20, 2004 the Council received the step submittal from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. On January 26, 2005 the ISRP provided its favorable review (ISRP document 2005-03) of the step submittal.

The proposed action is intended to address the conditional funding recommendation that this project received as part of the Lower Columbia and Estuary province review so that the project can be fully implemented.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS:

On September 11, 2002, the Council recommended funding as part of the project funding recommendations for Fiscal Years 2002 through 2004 for projects in the Lower Columbia and

Estuary provinces at \$381,671 for Fiscal Year 2003, \$321,823 for Fiscal Year 2004 and \$294,949 for Fiscal Year 2005. On September 9, 2003, as part of the of the Council's 2004 start-of-year budget, the Council confirmed the \$321,823 and acknowledged that favorable step review may increase the base budget. At the July 2004 meeting the Council approved \$294,949 for the project as part of the Fiscal Year 2005 start-of-year budget and noted that the project needs to stay within the approved scope as outlined in the original Council decision.

The proposed action associated with this step review has no immediate budgetary effect. The budget is currently operating within the Fiscal Year 2005 budget of \$294,949. The budgets associated with the conditioned artificial production and monitoring and evaluation tasks of the project will need to be addressed as part of a within-year budget adjustment as part of a future project selection process.

BACKGROUND:

Duncan Creek enters the Columbia River approximately 6 miles downstream from Bonneville Dam on the Washington side. Historically the creek was an important spawning area for chum salmon, but construction of a dam in 1963 caused a rapid decline in the population. The dam was modified in 2000 to allow free passage of chum into Duncan Creek. The objectives of this project are for the collection of brood stock for use in the Duncan Creek reintroduction effort, to monitor and maintain the physical conditions necessary for chum salmon spawning in the newly renovated stream channels, and to evaluate the viability of using this approach to chum salmon recovery.

The Duncan Creek project, originally proposed by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, originally was a High Priority solicitation project¹ and received a "B" ranking for a limited portion of the proposal from the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP)². The Council did not recommend the \$420,796 proposal for funding in its High Priority recommendations made on February 7, 2001 and March 7, 2001.

Though the Council did not approve funding, NOAA Fisheries and BPA agreed to fund the project for \$420,795 through the ESA placeholder in the 2001 Fish and Wildlife Program budget. As part of that decision, WDFW was asked to refine the proposal to include better M&E and other activities in response to the ISRP's comments and NOAA Fisheries review. BPA also requested additional chum salvage work in case of low water years. The project sponsors

¹ The "High Priority" project solicitation funded by the Bonneville Power Administration during Fiscal Year 2001, was intended to address projects resulting in immediate, on-the-ground benefits to threatened and endangered species of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin. This funding was not intended to build infrastructure or capacity that requires separate follow-on funding in subsequent fiscal years to do the on-the-ground implementation. Additional activities of the kind approved for funding in a "High Priority" project were to be proposed for funding in FY 2002 on their own merits in the appropriate province review.

² The ISRP reviewed the project in the High Priority process. Its limited recommendation for the project: *"Objective 1 of the proposal meets the High Priority criteria, namely creation or cleaning up of the spawning grounds. The remainder of the objectives does not meet the threshold criteria of one-time funding for on-the-ground benefits. Natural recolonization by the remnant chum stock in Duncan Creek should be pursued prior to introduction of outside stock. The proposal might be funded at a reduced level for work on the spawning sites."* (From ISRP 2001-1: High Priority Review).

subsequently revised the proposal addressing the comments and requests for additional monitoring and “salvage” work anticipated during low flow conditions in the fall of 2001.

This revision was the basis for CBFWA’s request received by the Council on July 31, 2001, for an additional \$420,890 for the project. The project sponsor developed a new proposal for a total of \$841,685.

On August 7, 2001, the Council decision was to defer consideration of artificial propagation activities and expanded monitoring components of the Duncan Creek proposal until the Lower Columbia Provincial review, and it requested additional information on the contingency plan for the salvage operation.

Additional discussion among Council, NOAA Fisheries and WDFW staffs occurred to respond to the Council’s information request. On August 29, 2001, the Council recommended that \$67,000 be added to the original \$420,795 provided to the National Marine Fisheries Service for the Duncan Creek chum spawning channel rehabilitation project. This additional \$67,000 recommended by the Council was to support the contingency salvage operation for adult chum salmon.

During the Lower Columbia and Estuary province review, CBFWA rated the proposal as a high priority. The ISRP provided a fundable recommendation for the benefits to chum, coho and sea-run cutthroat, though the ISRP cautioned that chum salmon should not be stocked until a plan for establishment of a wild chum population is developed consistent with a watershed assessment and that monitoring protocols are defined.

NOAA Fisheries commented that Duncan Creek was an important project to move chum spawning from the mainstem to the tributaries and believed it addressed RPAs 156 and 157. Bonneville supported funding the project and agreed with NOAA Fisheries that the restoration efforts would implement RPAs 156 and 157.

On September 11, 2002, as part of the Lower Columbia and Estuary province review, the Council agreed that the Duncan Creek project potentially could have substantial benefits for chum salmon restoration and recommended funding the project. The approval was conditioned with the understanding that the taking of captive broodstock and the potential of artificial production would trigger a Step review under the Fish and Wildlife Program. Therefore, funds associated with artificial production contained in the Construction and Implementation (objectives 3, 4 and 5) and Monitoring and Evaluation (objectives 3,4,5,6,7, and 8) budgets for the project are conditioned upon a favorable step review.

On October 20, 2004 the Council received the step submittal from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to address the conditions placed on the project as part of the Lower Columbia and Estuary province review. Council staff provided the submittal to the ISRP for review on October 22, 2004. On January 26, 2005 the ISRP provided its review (ISRP document 2005-03) of the step submittal.

ANALYSIS:

The ISRP found the step submittal to be complete in addressing the conditions placed on this project. The ISRP was pleased to see the sponsors addressing the original factors that had caused the extirpation of the Duncan Creek chum salmon and the members noted that this has not normally been the case in other reviews.

As part of its review, the ISRP provided helpful suggestions that possibly would be of value in bringing the project to its greatest potential for contributing to chum salmon recovery in Duncan Creek and the Lower Columbia.

The suggestions from the ISRP focused on the determination of project success and duration, and the monitoring and evaluation protocols. The ISRP's suggestions regarding the project success and duration focused on the relationship between founding population scenarios (e.g., volitional strays and adult outplanting) and timeframes for re-colonization and genetic effects of those scenarios. Though the ISRP was very impressed with the monitoring protocols as outlined in the step submittal in providing the information needed to evaluate re-establishing chum to Duncan Creek, the members felt that the monitoring and evaluation program could benefit from the addition of measuring habitat restoration activities and fish response, and evaluating the fitness effects from the different founding population scenarios.

Based on the ISRP recommendation, Council staff believes that the conditions placed on this project as part of the provincial review has been fully addressed and the artificial production and monitoring and evaluation tasks of the project can be implemented. The ISRP's suggestions regarding the relationship between founding population scenarios and time frames should be defined and incorporated into the proposal as part of the next project selection process. As for the improvements to the monitoring and evaluation program raised by the ISRP, Council staff suggests that if additional monitoring funding is needed for these tasks, that the sponsor seek additional monitoring funding for these tasks as part of a future solicitation and review.

ALTERNATIVES:

Because the ISRP provided a favorable recommendation and its suggestions were intended only to be beneficial and provide insight for the project sponsor, and because the proposed action has no budgetary affect, the Council staff does not recommend that any alternatives be evaluated at this time by the Fish and Wildlife Committee.