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June 7, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council

FROM: John Shurts, General Counsel
Steve Waste, Manager, Program Analysis and Evaluation.

SUBJECT: Use of "High Level Indicators" by Washington and Oregon

Chris Drivdahl of the Washington Governor's Salmon Recovery Office will discuss with the Council their experience in developing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on high-level indicators of progress in salmon recovery. This effort is reflected in their recent "State of the Salmon in Watersheds Report for 2004," and it involves a mixed set of indicators relating to population status, watershed conditions, and administrative actions. Ken Bierly and Greg Sieglitz, of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, will report on their experience developing similar "Environmental Indicators for the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds."

These are important efforts in their own right, as the Council needs to understand substantively what else is going on in the region with regard to large-scale programs addressing fish and wildlife that overlap with the Council's hydro mitigation program. But this agenda item (and the next) are more than that -- they are important preparation for the Council for its ultimate decisions later this year whether to undertake the proposed effort to adopt biological objectives into the program and, if so, what types of objectives and why and how they would be used.

The Council and staff need to prepare for that effort in two ways. One involves what the staff can provide in terms of technical information, policy analysis, and example or strawman biological objectives for the Council's program. We promised at the last meeting to talk with the Council on those subjects soon. But we also need to learn from the efforts and examples of others, and it seems best to learn that first -- what other entities are doing and proposing to do (and why) with regard to high-level objectives and indicators and related program-level monitoring and evaluation efforts. It is important both that we learn from what others have learned *and* that we make whatever the Council decides to do complementary and not an odds with what others are doing in the region, even as we also have to serve the needs of our own program. These two efforts and those of NOAA's are not all that we need to learn about and synch up with, but they are major parts of it.

Although the Washington and Oregon initiatives differ in terms of scale and scope, they share a common approach of using high-level indicators to mark progress towards program objectives. Thus, the experience of these two states can inform the efforts of the Council to develop provincial-level biological objectives. It will be important for provincial-level objectives to encompass a core set of population and habitat objectives common to the program and basin as a whole, while respecting and making use of the additional indicators and reporting needs of the individual states. Any effort by the Council to develop and gain regional acceptance of provincial-level objectives will be highly analogous to the prior efforts of Washington and Oregon, even as the types of objectives the Council might adopt and what purpose they will serve will differ from the states' efforts, and (we hope) be complementary.

Once established, provincial-level objectives will provide targets for our efforts at a regional approach to monitoring in order to evaluate the overall biological effectiveness of the Fish and Wildlife Program. The presentation on recovery goals and criteria by the NOAA Technical Recovery Teams by Rob Walton and Tom Cooney will provide further indication as to how detailed monitoring efforts may need to be at the population scale in order to support de-listing decisions. And, the Council has supported the work of the Columbia Systemwide Monitoring and Evaluation Project (CSMEP), which is developing tools and approaches that will help make monitoring and evaluation at a programmatic scale practical.

With this context, the staff will focus at the July and August meetings on examples of what the Council might adopt in the way of biological objectives, how these objectives might be used and what larger purposes they will serve, and how they will complement and not conflict or duplicate the objectives and indicators of others. The ultimate goal is a decision by the Council in fall as to whether and in what way to call for recommendations to amend the program to add biological objectives at the provincial scale.

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