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June 7, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council

FROM: John Shurts

SUBJECT: Update and discussion on NOAA Fisheries' recovery planning process

Rob Walton and Tom Cooney of NOAA Fisheries will brief the Council on the status of NOAA's efforts at recovery planning. The presentation and discussion with the members will have a particular focus on the technical and policy efforts to develop delisting criteria and evaluate recovery plans against that criteria.

Rob Walton will deliver a brief update on the status, schedules and plans for developing, evaluating and finalizing draft recovery plans and coordinating with other regional initiatives, including the Council's program, in the process. The bulk of the agenda time will be devoted to a briefing by Tom Cooney, who is leading NOAA's Technical Recovery Team efforts for the interior Columbia ESUs. We understand that Tom will discuss with the Council the TRT's efforts at developing population viability criteria, including examples of such criteria; the methods, data and assumptions involved in their development; the status and timing for producing draft and final versions of the viability criteria for public use; and how they might be used to shape and evaluate draft and final recovery plans. Tom and Rob will also discuss the relation of the technical viability criteria to the eventual delisting criteria, which have aspects other than the purely technical issues of population viability.

This is obviously an important effort in its own right, something the Council will have to grapple with given the overlap between the recovery planning efforts and the Council's hydro mitigation program. But this agenda item (and the previous one) 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. It will be critical to understand what NOAA is developing in the way of recovery objectives, and how the Council should coordinate with NOAA to make what the two efforts complementary, even as the Council has to serve the distinct needs of our own program.

The Interior Columbia TRT has posted two documents on its website related to viability criteria. One is a draft report titled “Viability Criteria: Summary of Approach and Preliminary Results” (July 2004). A copy of this draft report is attached to this memo. The other is a longer background technical piece titled “Preliminary Guidelines for Population-level Abundance, Productivity, Spatial Structure, and Diversity Supporting Viable Salmonid Populations: An Update” (December 2005). We will circulate copies of this report separately. It can be found at http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/trt/trt_viability.htm.

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