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June 1, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee

FROM: Steve Waste, Manager for Program Evaluation and Analysis

SUBJECT: Public Comments on Draft Guidance for Developing Monitoring and Evaluation as a Program Element of the Fish and Wildlife Program

Action

This is an informational briefing and no action is required by the Committee at this time.

Background

This draft guidance document was developed to facilitate the development of a monitoring component for the Program that over time will provide the basis for the quantitative assessment of progress toward the Program's objectives. In the Columbia River Basin, natural resource management entities collect and analyze many types of information. To effectively combine information to answer management questions will require monitoring across multiple geographic and temporal scales.

The Council is a member of the Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP), which is working to develop standardized protocols and methods for field data collection, data management, and analytical processes, which, in widespread use, would change this data into a common currency. This will enable data collected for an initial primary purpose to maintain value for use by subsequent secondary users, for example analyzing aggregate data ("rolling-up" the data) or conducting change analysis over time. While there are many potential analytical applications for aggregate data, this guidance identifies the need to coordinate the collection of data in a manner that can support evaluation and decision-making at higher-level spatial scales, for example subbasin plans, Evolutionary Significant Units, and provincial scale objectives. By supporting this work it will be possible to conduct basic assessment and evaluation work at the population level, and at a regional scale.

The draft guidance document and the previously approved Research Plan were used in the last two months to organize Mainstem/Systemwide proposals for recommended priority.

Discussion

A public review of the document was completed on May 28, 2006. Twelve comments were received from tribal, federal, and private entities, and one from an individual citizen (see Attachment 1.). Generally, the comments were supportive of the approach set forth in the guidance document and applauded the Council for leadership in this area. Specific comments received to date are characterized as follows:

- The document contains some redundancies and the need for clarification of some terms.
- The role of PNAMP should be clarified.
- The guidance is too focused on anadromous fish and should address habitat and wildlife.
- The document should address monitoring of invasive species, for example non-native shad.
- Monitoring should be conducted of all variables constraining freshwater rearing productivity including low nutrient levels and lack of key habitats.
- Explain how coordination will take place, describe the incentives for collaboration.
- The guidance should contain more detailed explanation of the Northwest Environmental Data Network.
- The guidance should describe how provincial scale objectives would be developed in 2006.
- The document should provide a link with the project selection process or explain the sequence by which the proposed program will be implemented.

Next Steps

- The ISRP/ISAB review will be completed on June 2, 2006.
- The staff will revise the document based on the comments received from the public and science group reviews. The staff will request approval from the Fish and Wildlife Committee and the Council.
- The MSRT review group will complete their work by issuing a report recommending to the Council funding for projects that will initiate implementation of: the Research Plan, the Guidance for Monitoring and Evaluation, and Columbia Basin data management.
- Council action for FY 2007-2009 project funding priorities will implement the sequence of monitoring tasks that are assigned to Bonneville for funding.

Future Steps

Enabling operational adaptive management and well-informed decision-making is the primary objective of monitoring at the programmatic scale. Implementation of adaptive management will require coordination between three key areas for which partnership exist or are being developed: research, monitoring and evaluation, and data management. Even if the three partnerships are only semi-formal in an administrative sense, the synergy that could result from linking research, monitoring and evaluation, and data management could significantly increase the ability of the region to re-direct its efforts based on the cumulative results of the projects within the program. Specifically:

- The research partnership would increase the ability of the region to reduce scientific uncertainty
- The monitoring partnership would support the programmatic evaluation of the program
- The data partnership could develop a data repository for analytical manipulation of data at the programmatic scale

Accountability must be institutionalized at the programmatic scale, and therefore linkages must be established between research, monitoring and evaluation, and data management.

Attachment 1. List of Parties Providing Comments on the Draft Guidance for Monitoring and Evaluation

Joe Chester, citizen

James Geisleman, Engineer/Biologist, Bonneville Power Administration

Jay Hesse, Research Program Division Leader, Nez Perce Tribe

Chris Hunter, Fisheries Administrator, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

Tony Meyer, Executive Director, Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group

Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (30 members)

Paul Ocker, Fishery Biologist, Northwest Division, Army Corps of Engineers

Thomas O'Neill, Northwest Habitat Institute

Chuck Peven, Fisheries Program Manager, Chelan Public Utility District

Jesse Schwartz, UBNPME Project Advisor, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

Stewart Toshach, Coordinator, Pacific Northwest Environmental Data Network (NED)

Joe Peone, Director, Fish and Wildlife Department, Colville Confederated Tribe

Keith Wolf, Principal Scientist, Keith Wolf and Associates