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November 2, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee

FROM: Patty O'Toole

SUBJECT: Discussion of innovative project solicitations

Background

The Innovative Project funding category, which was suggested by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) in past annual program reviews, was designed to improve knowledge, encourage creative thinking, and provide an opportunity for sponsors to submit proposals that focus on testing new methods and technologies designed to directly benefit fish and wildlife in the Columbia River Basins. Innovative projects were funded in Fiscal Years (FY) 1998, 2000, 2001, and 2002.

In 2002 the Council recommended eight projects under the Innovative category to Bonneville for funding. After the selection process was completed, Bonneville funded only two of the recommended proposals, citing the Bonneville fiscal crisis as the reason. Bonneville's choice of those two projects was based on funding only those projects that Bonneville believed met both the needs of the Fish and Wildlife Program and the Biological Opinion. The process included a review of proposals by the ISRP and the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA). The project selection process, from proposal solicitation to final project approval by Bonneville required approximately seven months to complete.

The Council adjusted the selection process for innovative proposals each year the process was used. In 2002, the Council sought to solicit for "pilot projects" rather than full-scale projects and limited their duration to a maximum of 18 months. The purpose was to implement shorter-term demonstration projects so that their results could be evaluated sooner. The solicitation called for projects that would be a one-time only contract for the complete scope of work and projects were not to exceed \$200,000. A total of \$2 million was made available to fund projects in the Innovative category in 2002. In previous years, proposals could have larger budgets and longer performance periods.

The ISRP recommended that the Council continue to have a specific innovative projects solicitation in their programmatic comments as part of their preliminary review of proposals for 07-09-project solicitation (June 1, 2006). They suggest that innovative projects can address unexplored research uncertainties or unknown new technologies, and that projects implemented through the innovative solicitations in the past (such as the ocean tracking project (POST), nutrient supplementation) have benefited the Fish and Wildlife Program. They suggest that special topic solicitations such as nutrient supplementation should be developed as targeted requests for proposals.

The Council, in its FY 2007-2009 project recommendations recommended a budget placeholder of \$1,000,000 per year for an innovative project solicitation. The Council members indicated during discussions of the placeholder, that this particular solicitation should focus on on-the-ground “demonstration” projects. These proposals should result in immediate benefits to productivity or survival to fish and wildlife.

At the November committee meeting we want to confirm how best to proceed towards an innovative project solicitation during FY 2007. Discussion topics may include timeframe, solicitation and selection criteria, and the type of solicitation that would work best.