



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Fish Division
Columbia River Investigations
17330 SE Evelyn Street
Clackamas, OR 97015-9514
(971) 673-6061
FAX (971) 673-6073

July 25, 2007



Patty O'Toole
Program Implementation Manager
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW Sixth Avenue / Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Ms. O'Toole

This letter is in response to the ISRP review of FY 2007-2009 Innovative Proposals for the Columbia River Basin Fish & Wildlife Program. I appreciate the time and effort reviewers invested in preparing thoughtful critical appraisals of proposals. I would like to take this opportunity to address several specific comments made by ISRP reviewers regarding proposal 200751500, *Elemental analysis of fin spines: A potential tool for assessing movement of white sturgeon within the Lower and Mid-Columbia River basin*.

Meeting Innovative Criteria: The ISRP states that "Elemental analysis has been applied previously for studies of white sturgeon in the Columbia River Basin, so this project does not meet the innovative criteria." To our knowledge, there is no published study utilizing fin spine chemistry to examine life history characteristics of white sturgeon in the Columbia River Basin. As described in our proposal, published studies using sturgeon fin-spine chemistry are for white sturgeon in the Fraser River, B.C. and for Russian sturgeon in the Caspian Sea. For the Fraser River study, fin spines from 10 landlocked Columbia River white sturgeon were provided (from ODFW archived samples) solely as an experimental control group. Both studies addressed marine freshwater residency periods, not movements within a freshwater system. Elemental analysis of fin spines has not been used to examine any aspect of Columbia River white sturgeon biology or ecology. Our proposed project would provide a low-cost first-time demonstration of fin-spine microchemistry as a tool for describing freshwater movements of white sturgeon.

Geographic Scope and Applicability: The ISRP review of proposal 200751500 states that "If the method was used as a technique in a broad scale, comprehensive program to identify limiting factors for white sturgeon, it would have merit." The proposed project would be test and validate the method prior to investing in a basin-wide effort to assess the extent of upstream and downstream migration limitation imposed by mainstem dams. I believe validation of the innovative technique, then implementation at a larger scale, is a more cost effective approach to

applying of this method. Still, the geographic scope we would examine while validating the technique would have immediate implications regarding a key factor limiting white sturgeon productivity -- movements among impoundments from Bonneville and McNary dams.

Likelihood of completing work: Lastly, the ISRP review of proposal 200751500 states there is an ambitious program of field sampling for water, sediments, and white sturgeon, making it unlikely that all work could be finished in 18 months. I believe the workload is ambitious, but well planned. As detailed in the proposal narrative, 1) there is no sampling of any sediments for this project (the ISRP may have assumed this was needed); 2) fin-spine samples would come from existing archives (maintained by ODFW), so no additional sampling of white sturgeon is needed; and 3) the water samples (from 20 specific locations) would be obtained, with minimal effort, while conducting field work for two ongoing BPA-funded projects (198605000 and 199007700). Therefore no additional travel or boat time is needed to obtain field samples, and there should be no problem completing the work within the 18 month time-frame.

The ISRP review is an appropriate and useful first step in the project selection process. However given the large number of detailed proposals and the brief review period, I feel that the ISRP may have misinterpreted a few details of our proposal. As such, I hope that Council members will consider our clarifying responses before making a final decision on Innovative Project funding.

Sincerely,

Signed copy sent by U.S. Postal Mail

Thomas A Rien
Columbia River Coordination Program Leader

cc: Ed Bowles, Tony Nigro, Tucker Jones, Colin Chapman, Kevleen Melcher,
Jessica Miller (Oregon State University)