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February 1, 2007

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Doug Marker, Director
Fish and Wildlife Division

SUBJECT: Release of Council Oceans Paper for Public Comment

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Request public comment on the Council's issue paper for considering ocean conditions in its fish and wildlife project review and recommendations.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Section 4(h)(10)(D) of the 1980 Power Act provides in part that the Council is to "consider the impact of ocean conditions on fish and wildlife populations". To respond, the Council developed an issue paper titled *Consideration of Ocean Conditions in the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program* (Council Document 97-6). The Council has used this paper in project review and funding recommendations since 1997. The staff recommends that the Council seek comment on possible revision of this paper prior to beginning the next project selection process and calling for amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Program. The proposed request for public comment is attached.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS:

None.

BACKGROUND:

The Council's issue paper frames how the Council considers management actions and research that relate to how ocean, near ocean and estuary conditions as part of its project review and recommendations. This consideration is part of the 1996 amendment to the 1980 Power Act that guides the standards for Council fish and wildlife proposal review and recommendations.

ANALYSIS:

The Council's paper was written in 1997. As the Council considers the state of the science on ocean and estuary conditions in its preparation for amending the Program, there may be some specific suggestions from the public and the scientific community on how the Council should revise its considerations for project review and amendment recommendations. The proposed comment period is through March 31, 2007.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Do not seek public comment.
2. Rely on staff briefings, ISAB reports and the proposed science-policy conference to inform the Council on the continued use or revision of the ocean paper.

Because of the continuing interest in the role of the ocean and estuary in fish and wildlife restoration, the staff recommend asking for comment on the paper.

ATTACHMENT:

Draft request for comment

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To Interested Parties:

The Council invites your comment on the guidance the Council uses in considering ocean conditions in its fish and wildlife project funding recommendations. Section 4(h)(10)(D) of the 1980 Power Act provides, in part, that "in making its recommendations" to the Bonneville Power Administration, the Council is to "consider the impact of ocean conditions on fish and wildlife populations". Congress gave the Council no other guidance.

In responding to this Congressional direction, the Council developed an issue paper titled *Consideration of Ocean Conditions in the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program* (Council Document 97-6; <http://www.nwcouncil.org/library/1997/97-6.htm>). The Council has used this paper in subsequent project funding reviews and recommendations.

Anticipating amendment of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program later this year, and also considering the design of future project funding processes, the Council invites public comment on revision of this policy paper. In particular, the Council seeks comment on:

- How any revision of this policy paper should incorporate the current state of scientific information about the influence of ocean conditions on fish and wildlife populations in the Columbia Basin.
- How the Council should incorporate ocean conditions in reviewing management actions funded through the Program.
- The emphasis the Council should place on proposals to improve estuary and near ocean conditions for fish and wildlife.
- The emphasis the Council should place on research proposals for ocean, near ocean and estuary conditions.
- How the Council should take into account and coordinate with other ocean and climatic programs addressing Columbia River salmon populations.

Please send your comments by March 31, 2007 to:

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Director, Fish and Wildlife Division
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW Sixth St., Suite 1100
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or

dmarker@nwcouncil.org