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May 31, 2007

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Follow-up action for the *Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation*, Project 1995-057-02.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Council staff recommends that the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of Fort Hall (SBT) has adequately addressed the conditions placed on this project as part of the funding recommendation associated with Fiscal Year 2007-2009.

At the June Council meeting, staff will provide an overview of this project and seek a recommendation from the fish and wildlife committee and the Council.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The recommended expense¹ and capital² budgets for this project remain the same as conditioned in the recommended Fiscal Year 2007, 2008, and 2009 budgets.

BACKGROUND and ANALYSIS:

The SBT *Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Project* mitigates, through acquisition, for habitat losses in the Upper Snake Province caused by hydropower development. In conjunction with acquisitions, the project also performs ongoing operations and management to maintain and enhance acquired lands.

¹ The Council and Bonneville recommended an expense budget in FY 2007 @ \$380,000, FY 2008 @ \$395,000 and FY 2009 at \$395,000.

² The Council and Bonneville recommended a capital budget in FY 2007 @ \$1,670,000, FY 2008 @ \$1,655,000 and FY 2009 at \$1,655,000.

The Council transmitted project-specific recommendations to the Bonneville Power Administration in October 2006. In making its recommendations, the Council provided comments on certain projects as a condition to funding. These comments generally addressed concerns raised by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) in their final recommendation of proposals submitted for Fiscal Years 2007-2009 (ISRP document 2006-6). The Council comment for the Shoshone Bannock Tribes *Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation* as presented in the final decision document stated the following.

ISRP not fundable. Funding contingent on favorable ISRP and Council review of revised proposal that is responsive to ISRP concerns.

On February 9, 2007 the Council received Bonneville's implementation plan for the Fish and Wildlife Program during Fiscal Year 2007 - 2009. As part of this decision, Bonneville requested that the project funding also be contingent upon addressing ISRP concerns prior to contracting.

On April 24, 2007, the Council received the SBT response to these concerns, and on May 30, 2007 the ISRP completed its review (ISRP document 2007-6) of the submittal (see attachment 1).

ANALYSIS:

The original project proposal associated with the Fiscal Year 2007 - 2009 solicitation did not include a narrative section. The omission led to the ISRP finding the proposal "not fundable" since the narrative section contains the scientific detail necessary for the ISRP to adequately review the proposal.

The ISRP provided a "Meets Scientific Review Criteria - In Part (Qualified)" recommendation for the revised proposal that included a narrative section. The review is qualified to inform the sponsor that certain elements of the project need additional detail and development to strengthen the project in the next solicitation process. The additional elements focus on documentation of the benefits of land acquisitions and the relationship of enhanced habitat to the surrounding area. In addition, the ISRP confirmed their concerns regarding the use of the Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) for monitoring land acquisitions.³

Based on the review by the ISRP, the Council staff believes that the sponsor has adequately addressed the Council's funding condition. Comments provided by the review should be considered during the development of the next project solicitation process. In addition, it needs to be noted that the funding level for Fiscal Year 2007 - 2009 remains interim pending wildlife O&M review.

³ The ISRP stated in the Retrospective Report (ISRP 2005-14) that the wildlife program monitoring, which now is based on the unit of mitigation, habitat (measured as HUs [Habitat Units], determined from HEP [Habitat Evaluation Procedure]), be extended to include a requirement for some degree of direct monitoring of target (and perhaps some non-target) wildlife populations.

Attachment 1. ISRP review of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' *Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation*, Project 1995-057-02.



Independent Scientific Review Panel
for the Northwest Power & Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, Oregon 97204
www.nwccouncil.org/fw/isrp

Memorandum (ISRP 2007-6)

May 29, 2007

To: Tony Grover, Fish and Wildlife Division Director, Northwest Power and Conservation Council

From: Eric Loudenslager, ISRP Chair

Subject: FY 2007-09 Follow-up Review of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Project 199505702

Background

At the Council's April 24, 2007 request, the ISRP reviewed a revised proposal for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Project. This is a follow-up review to the ISRP's final review of the original FY 2007-09 proposal. The ISRP found the original proposal "not fundable" because it did not include a narrative section including the key scientific information needed to justify the proposed actions (see appendix). The ISRP's final comments highlighted the need for a revised proposal to include a comprehensive summary and evaluation of past accomplishments in terms of benefits to fish and wildlife. Subsequently, the Council recommended funding contingent on a favorable ISRP and Council review of a revised proposal that is responsive to the ISRP's concerns. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' revised proposal is intended to meet those conditions, and the ISRP reviewed it with the standard ISRP review criteria.

The revised proposal can be found at:

www.cbfwa.org/solicitation/components/forms/Proposal.cfm?PropID=847

ISRP Recommendation and Summary

Recommendation: Meets Scientific Review Criteria (Qualified)

Much of the background, rationale, and relationships to other projects, partners and biological objectives are now quite well presented for this project.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is mentioned but the monitoring program has only recently begun. The stated intent is to make the M&E plan compatible with the plan for Idaho wildlife mitigation projects (Unnasch et al. 2003). That said, there must be a plan for evaluation, summarization, and presentation of biological results related to project activities. Data generated by the monitoring plan must be appropriately analyzed and results shared. In future proposals for O&M on parcels for the Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation, more specific information should be provided about what is needed to ensure appropriate habitat quality for the focal species.

The revised proposal states that HEP will be used to evaluate the project. The ISRP has gone on record as having concerns with using HEP for monitoring purposes. In our 1997-2005 Retrospective Report, we “urged the Wildlife program away from a sole emphasis on Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) evaluation and toward more accountability (M&E) for actual wildlife populations” (ISRP 2005-14⁴). We again emphasized this point in our Programmatic Comments for our FY 2007-09 project review (ISRP 2006-4a⁵). The ISRP recommends that HEP should only be used as an initial scoring system for mitigation agreements and should not play any role in biological monitoring.

The revised proposal describes the background, accomplishments, relationships to other projects, and plans for M&E so now meets scientific review criteria (qualified). The ISRP recommendation is qualified because no documentation of benefits to fish and wildlife are provided; no plans for analysis and presentation of results are presented; and work elements to enhance habitat are not clearly linked to existing habitat conditions and landscape features. Documentation and plans should be developed in time to provide the needed information to fully justify the project in the next project selection process.

Specific Comments

1. Technical and/or scientific background

Considerable background on the project and the role of this project are presented. This background includes the amount of land purchased, the land requirements still needed, and expression of a strong interest in purchasing the needed land.

2. Rationale and significance to subbasin plans and regional programs

The importance to the subbasin plan and the associations with other projects are documented.

3. Relationships to other projects

Relationships to other similar projects in the area are specifically noted.

4. Project history

The project history describes the amount of lost habitat and the purchases made to date (and those still needed). The desire to purchase more land (when funds become available) is also described. Partnership is an important part of this project, and partners are mentioned.

⁴ www.nwcouncil.org/library/isrp/isrp2005-14.htm

⁵ www.nwcouncil.org/library/isrp/isrp2006-4a.pdf

5. Proposal biological objectives, work elements, and methods

General biological objectives are identified including maintain and enhance available habitat for key species, determine site-specific management, and develop and implement enhancement plans. More specifically, control of invasive and exotic species, restoration of native species, and prevention of trespass are listed. In the future, more explanation should be provided to justify 1) where and why specific activities are necessary, and 2) what is necessary to maintain and enhance habitat quality for focal species. It will also be particularly important to have an effective summary of progress made in enhancing habitat and in prospects for long-term control of invasive species. The revised proposal indicates that implementation of M&E based on published approaches (e.g., noxious weed surveys, bald eagle winter counts) has started.

6. Key personnel, facilities, and equipment

Access to personnel, facilities and equipment are mentioned. However, key personnel are not identified, and responsibilities are not detailed.

7. Information Transfer

Plans for information transfer are not described but are essential (qualified).

8. Benefits to Fish and Wildlife

Benefits are identified in a very general way (acres purchased, etc.). But, documentation of specific benefits to wildlife must be provided in future proposals. In the current proposal the work elements for habitat improvement, such as fencing and invasive-weed control, are not specific enough for the ISRP to establish that the tasks are being executed in the most important places. This concern is the basis for part of the "qualified" recommendation.

Appendix. Final ISRP FY 2007-09 Comments on Project 199505702 - Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation

Sponsor: Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

Province: Upper Snake **Subbasin:** Snake Upper

Sponsor Proposed Budgets: FY07: \$2,050,000 FY08: \$2,050,000 FY09: \$2,050,000

Short description: Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Administration and O&M projects. Continue acquisition of mitigation projects and conduct required operations and maintenance activities on Soda Springs Hills and Rudeen Ranch mitigation projects

ISRP final recommendation: Not fundable

Comment (from response loop):

The proposal did not include any narrative except to describe agreements and administrative processes, and the response likewise did not constitute an actual proposal. Nevertheless, they pulled the cost of acquiring wildlife habitat out of the budget and are now asking for funds to perform O&M at existing sites and to pursue opportunities for future acquisitions. The response does not provide enough information to evaluate the scientific merit of the project.

The sponsors state that past funding provided for a wide variety of habitat protection and enhancement activities and that assessment of habitat improvement activities is being quantified. In addition they note that long-term management plans are being prepared in cooperation with other agencies. Reviewers are told, “detailed description of the activities can be found in project annual reports and work plans submitted to BPA.” A comprehensive summary and evaluation of past accomplishments in terms of benefits to fish and wildlife would be a useful basis for the sponsors to begin formulating a future proposal should they choose to do so.

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