

Tom Karier
Chair
Washington

Frank L. Cassidy Jr.
"Larry"
Washington

Jim Kempton
Idaho

W. Bill Booth
Idaho



Joan M. Dukes
Vice-Chair
Oregon

Melinda S. Eden
Oregon

Bruce A. Measure
Montana

Rhonda Whiting
Montana

May 31, 2007

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council recommendation for the ISRP review of the Combined Habitat Assessment Procedure.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Council staff recommends that the ISRP review the work element associated with the Combined Habitat Assessment Procedure (CHAP) for the *Habitat Evaluation Procedure*, Project 2006-006-00 and the associated CHAP work element in *Willamette Wildlife Mitigation* (1992-068-00).

At the June Council meeting, staff will provide an overview of these projects and work elements and seek a recommendation from the fish and wildlife committee and the Council.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Council confirms the recommended expense budget for this project as defined in Bonneville's implementation plan for Fiscal Years 2007, 2008, and 2009 of \$297,000 per fiscal year.¹

BACKGROUND and ANALYSIS:

The Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) Project documents habitat/wildlife losses associated with construction of federal hydro-facilities on the Columbia River and is also used to quantify habitat gains resulting from wildlife mitigation/compensation projects funded by the Bonneville.

The Council transmitted project-specific recommendations to the Bonneville Power Administration in October 2006. In making its recommendations, the Council provided

¹ The Council Recommended \$222,000 per year for FY 2007 - 2009. Bonneville's implementation plan reflects \$297,000 per fiscal year.

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 HEP Project as presented in the final decision document stated the following.

“Scope expansion not accepted. Budget at the FY 2006 level”²

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 provide \$65,000 in project funding to address additional work needed on a crediting process for the Willamette Basin wildlife (i.e., CHAP).

Since this work element associated with CHAP did not receive a favorable review, it is necessary to follow-up on the project funding level for this work element as recommended by Bonneville.

ANALYSIS:

Project sponsors developed several proposals in the Fiscal Year 2007 - 2009 process to use an alternate wildlife and habitat suitability assessment method, the Combined Habitat Assessment Procedure (CHAP).

Overall, the ISRP reviewed four projects in the Fiscal Year 2007- 2009 project solicitation that featured elements of CHAP in their proposals. The ISRP supported the CHAP elements in two proposals: the *Habitat and Biodiversity Information System* (2003-072-00) and the *Albeni Falls Operational Loss Assessment* (2007-312-00), but deemed the CHAP elements of the two other projects not fundable - *Habitat Evaluation Procedure* (2006-006-00) and *Willamette Wildlife Mitigation* (1992-068-00).

In the HEP proposal evaluation the ISRP stated:

“The reviewers found the CHAP portion of the proposal Not Fundable. The proposal did not provide convincing evidence that the approach of NWI would be a significant improvement over the HEP-derived habitat unit metric now in place. In particular, the methods used to determine habitat value (HV) were not clearly presented. It would have been useful for the proposal to include a more clear explanation of the calculation and use of habitat value, with an example from a subbasin of how to use the metric, habitat value, as a measure of progress towards mitigation. It seems likely that direct biological M&E will almost always be more convincing, more interpretable, and thus more useful for evaluation and application to management decision-making than would be a less direct, HEP-type measure. The proposal did not convince the ISRP that the NWI efforts to improve HEP would be as good as direct biological M&E.”

² The ISRP found the CHAP portion of the proposal “Not Fundable” since evidence regarding this approach did not demonstrate a significant improvement over the HEP-derived habitat unit metric now in place.

However, the ISRP concluded in the Albeni Falls proposal that the CHAP work element in the context of the "Index to Ecological Integrity" of this proposal is better justified and provided a creative, multi-disciplinary approach to restore the ecology of the floodplain.

Generally, it seems that the CHAP method appears to provide certain advantages over HEP in the Willamette to assess properties to mitigate for identified losses, to calculate the number of habitat units to credit for those properties, and to develop better management plans for properties purchased. The Willamette possesses a different species mix than the species used to calculate losses in the original Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP). The Willamette subbasin plan identifies the valley and hillside habitats as the areas of primary focus for restoration, rather than upland, forest habitats - the location of most of the hydro-projects. Bonneville also appears to support some use of CHAP in the Willamette system.

Though it appears it would take a program amendment to change the currency for expressing and crediting against wildlife losses, the Council is not as wedded to the method to assess those properties and assign appropriate Habitat Units to credit those mitigation efforts. HEP, though used throughout the program, is not a panacea for crediting. As it pertains to the Willamette, CHAP could provide a better method to calculate the value of properties used to mitigate for the program defined losses.

Given the ISRP's CHAP recommendations, sending the two projects that received "Do Not Fund" CHAP recommendations back for ISRP review appear to be a viable alternative to continuing the use of HEP to assess the Willamette properties.

Based on this analysis, the Council staff recommends that the sponsors meet with the ISRP to review the Panel's review of the CHAP work elements and attempt to address the ISRP concerns on the use of the CHAP methodology as it applies to Willamette wildlife mitigation. Should the ISRP continue to not support the use of CHAP as a crediting methodology, the Council could continue to use the HEP method for project assessment.