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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

**FROM:** Council Staff

**SUBJECT:** Conceptual design for the next project review process

### BACKGROUND:

Over the past year, staff has presented a conceptual design for how we might conduct project review for FY 2010-12 and years beyond. The concept generally involves grouping projects into similar categories that would allow for an appropriate and flexible level of review to reflect differences in recommended funding timeframes, reporting, and funding commitments. The concept also factors in a phased approach or rolling process to avoid the one-time you-all come approach that seems to be the least desirable method of project review.

With program amendments taking most of our attention the last few months, staff returned to talking about project review at our retreat in September. We discussed the conceptual design and spent time confirming our current assumptions. We also assessed our new surroundings – the upcoming products that could greatly influence our process - the biological opinion (BiOp) and the possible long term agreements (LTAs). In our discussion, we confirmed the general elements of the process we described to you early in the year (i.e., conducting category-based project review and doing focused solicitations under a phased approach) while factoring in these other processes. If in fact the BiOp and the LTAs fall into place, we have thought about how we might respond to those influences. In the absence of those influences, we could default to our original conceptual framework described above. We will share our current assumptions and understanding to get a sense from the committee if that is the direction in which we should proceed.

### Approach

There are basically three big areas that we anticipate for future program funding: the biological opinion, possible long-term agreements, and other program priorities. Many of the implementation priorities could be largely established through the BiOp and the LTAs. Science review may be best conducted at the subbasin level, looking at all past and planned actions within the context of focal species, limiting factors and strategy, goals and objectives for the

subbasin. Additional science review would take place on individual projects as necessary, again done in the context of the entire subbasin. This subbasin-specific, integrated review may result in some activities having varied terms of funding and different timing or reviews. The subset of available funding beyond that committed to the pre-determined priorities under the BiOp and LTAs should be considered the more discretionary funding and could be applied in a strategic and targeted manner. This is where the Council might consider a grant-like approach to fund projects that target particular areas of the program that are under-represented to address priorities above and beyond ESA-listed anadromous fish populations. These projects could be shorter term projects that require annual review. A targeted solicitation review process would look much like the process we have used in the past. The general assumptions (below) still remain, but we have factored in the processes associated with the anticipated BiOp and the LTAs.

## **General Assumptions**

### **Reviews:**

- Every project in the program will undergo scientific review – none are exempt
- Ongoing type projects will need to be reviewed in part on past performance
- The intent is to periodically review each action (i.e., initiative or project), including the immediate past and projected future slate of actions, in a version of the subbasin-by-subbasin “rolling review” with comprehensive subbasin visits every three-to-five years.
- The nature of the reviews will be different based on different characteristics of types or categories of projects - new projects may have different review criteria than ongoing projects
- Artificial production programs should be consistent with the subbasin plans and put into context of that subbasin
- Work toward having sponsors put their projects into context of other work going on in the subbasin (from all funding sources)
- All projects get reviewed based on consistency with subbasin plans
- Link project objectives with limiting factors
- Link actions to regional M&E framework
- **Process:**
- Targeted solicitations will undergo normal review process - new projects; under-represented program priorities
- Funding commitments can be multi-year
- Review projects based on category over a phased process (not all at once)
- Clearly articulate timeframes, expectations, and definitions to the region
- Target date for next recommendations would be mid-2009 (May 2009), to be ahead of the start of Fiscal Year 2010