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November 29, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Jim Ruff – Manager, Mainstem Passage and River Operations
John Fazio – Senior Power Systems Analyst

SUBJECT: Preliminary Analysis of the Draft 2008 FCRPS Biological Opinion

The NOAA Fisheries' draft 2008 Biological Opinion (BiOp) on the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) was released on October 31, 2007. Analytical data used to simulate the proposed mainstem operation in that draft will not be available to Council staff until November 29th – past the deadline for packet material. Staff should be able to complete a preliminary assessment of the power system impacts of the draft BiOp in time for the December Council meeting. A summary of the analysis will be provided to Council members as soon as it is available. The analysis will focus on changes in reservoir elevations, river flows, energy production and cost between the 2004 BiOp and the 2008 version. Biological impacts, as reported in the draft BiOp, were also based on differences from the 2004 BiOp (without the additional court-ordered actions for 2006 and 2007).

Our analysis will be preliminary, in part, because there remains some uncertainty among the federal agencies concerning the bypass spill and juvenile transport operations.¹ In addition, the levels of bypass spill assumed for projects with removable spillway weirs in the BiOp were based on the federal agencies' best estimates of what would be needed to meet biological performance standards.

However, several mainstem projects are or will be evaluating different operational alternatives to confirm that standards are being met. It is possible that the outcomes of those biological studies will show that higher spill levels will be required to meet those standards. Due to these reasons, it would be fair to characterize our power system analysis as preliminary and conservative.

¹ The mainstem hydroelectric operation reported in the draft 2008 BiOp proposed a two-step transport-spill option for the collector projects. At least one federal agency is now requesting a three-step transport-spill operation be modeled to evaluate the difference in survival on Snake River steelhead.