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September 30, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee

FROM: Nancy Leonard, Fish, Wildlife and Ecosystem Monitoring and Evaluation Manager
Patty O'Toole, Program Implementation Manager
Laura Robinson, Fish and Wildlife Division Intern

SUBJECT: Fish and Wildlife Program – check in

At the October Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting, staff will review the status of tasks called for in the Council's 2009 Fish and Wildlife Program. Over the next several months, staff will be considering the status of these tasks as we look towards the next Fish and Wildlife Program Amendment process and determine what needs to be done in preparation.

Staff will specifically discuss three of these tasks at the October Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting and review progress and approaches to address to these in the near-term. These are the 1) draft MERR Plan revision (see attachment 1), 2) refinement of Program objectives and 3) development of Multi-year Action Plans.

Attachment 1: Draft MERR Plan Revisions

The 2009 Fish and Wildlife Program states that it now focuses on performance, including an emphasis on: reporting of results; accountability; adaptive management; developing Program quantitative objectives; and expanding the monitoring and evaluation framework with a commitment to use the information to make better decisions and report frequently on Program progress. In response to the Program, the Council released a draft MERR Plan during March 2010 for public comments and for review by the ISAB and ISRP. Comments received on the March 2010 draft MERR Plan version were divided into (1) technical and editorial comments and (2) policy comments. Policy comments were subdivided into three buckets based on when they would be addressed.

The July version of the MERR Plan addresses the technical and editorial comments and the policy comments assigned to bucket one. The July 2010 MERR Plan is available at www.nwcouncil.org/fw/merr. Several placeholders were inserted in the July 2010 version, and these will remain until policy items in buckets two and three are addressed. During the August 2010 Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting, staff provided a brief update of steps to address the bucket two and three policy items.

During the October 2010 Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting staff will:

- Suggest adding a description about how the Council will consider the MERR Plan's Implementation Strategies Section (**Table 1**). This will provide timely guidance to the region as the strategies are being developed.
- Summarize the textual revisions related to the draft Management Questions, existing reporting forum description, and updating the content of the "Revision Approach and Status" document (**Table 2** below).

If the Council approves of Staff suggested revisions, these could be shared with the region through a November 2010 revised Draft MERR Plan.

The remaining placeholders in the July 2010 MERR Plan (prioritization components, confidence level/desired effect size, new reporting forum, and MERR Plan structure) would be kept in the proposed November 2010 MERR Plan version. These placeholders will be addressed as described during the August 2010 Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting and in the "Revision Approach and Status Paper" available on the Council's MERR PLAN webpage (www.nwcouncil.org/fw/merr)

Table 1: Additional Guidance for Implementation Strategies Section

Staff Rational for Additional Guidance:

- The region has develop a component of the Anadromous Fish Implementation Strategy, referred to as the Anadromous Salmonid Monitoring Strategy (ASMS). The coordinators of the ASMS, Council, NOAA, CBFWA and BPA, have submitted the ASMS to the ISRP and ISAB asking for their review of the strategy. Pending the outcome of the ISRP and ISAB review of the ASMS, the ASMS could be a component of the MERR Plans' Anadromous Fish Implementation Strategy.
- Work is also being conducted by the resident fish advisory committee and wildlife advisory committees, hosted by CBFWA, on the Resident Fish Implementation Strategy and Wildlife Implementation Strategy following the guidance provided in the draft MERR Plan (March 2010, and July 2010 versions).
- The draft MERR Plan, however, lacks clear guidance as to how the implementation strategies will be treated by the Council and within the MERR Plan. Below is suggested draft text to be included in the next revision of the MERR Plan (tentatively November 2010 version) that may provide that clarity.

Staff Suggested Additional Guidance Text (bolded larger text in brackets):

[Note: first 5 paragraphs not copied from the draft July 2010 MERR Plan]

Ultimately, these implementation strategies should provide sufficient guidance to ensure that the data sharing and aggregating necessary for evaluating and reporting on the Program occurs, as well as meeting the assessment needs of other processes recognized by the Program, such as assessments for recovery plans and biological opinions. **{Additionally, these strategies may provide contextual background information for ISRP review of individual projects, as relevant, to describe the basinwide strategy to which projects are contributing. Further, these strategies will help towards identify indicators and associated data that can be used for Programmatic progress assessments.}**

[Note: three paragraphs located after the above paragraph are not copied from the draft July 2010 MERR Plan]

{The Implementation Strategies are produced by tribal, state and federal fish and wildlife managers as well as by entities involved in coordinating RME. As these strategies are developed and provided to the Council for inclusion under the MERR Plan's Implementation Strategies, the Council will validate the information contained in these strategies by:

- **Informing the Fish and Wildlife Committee and the Council on the status of the draft implementation strategy being developed by the region;**

- **Work with relevant project proponents to give them opportunities to comment and contribute to the draft strategy and having all comments and concerns addressed as appropriate;**
- **Seeking informal ISAB and ISRP review and comment on the draft strategy, either in advance of or concurrently with a related project review process as preferred by the ISRP and ISAB; and**
- **Posting on the Council website the draft strategy, or sub-component, that has substantial support by the region as being a useful coordinated implementation strategy.}**

Development of implementation strategies begins following approval of the July version of the Draft MERR Plan. The Council encourages a collaborative process involving fish and wildlife managers. The Implementation Strategies will be completed by 2014. The resources required for developing each implementation strategy will vary and will be discussed as needed. The implementation strategies will remain in the ownership of its authors. **{Although, the Council may consider formally adopting these implementation strategies in the future, for now the strategies will be considered as informal documents that provide: (1) a collaborative and coherent summary of the RME being conducted through the Program, (2) provide contextual information for review of relevant projects, and (3) inform Program progress assessment. As informal strategies, the Council does not expect any of the regional partners to formally adopt these strategies.}**

[Note: last paragraph not copied from the draft July 2010 MERR Plan]

Does the Fish and Wildlife Committee support Staff suggestion to include the additional guidance for the MERR Plan's Implementation Strategies section in a November 2010 MERR Plan version?

Table 2: Council Management Questions, Existing Reporting Forum, and ‘Revision Approach and Status’ document	
Item	Summary of revision
Management Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All questions formatted so that the desired answer for all questions is a ‘yes’ - Harvest questions was clarified - A question addressing FW Program’s intent to mitigate for lost opportunities, such as resident fish substitution was added.
Existing reporting forum	Staff suggests that the description of existing reporting forum from the March 2010 draft MERR Plan be inserted in the next MERR Plan revision as no public comments were received related to the these Program Review Process, Project Review Process, and Science-Policy Exchange.)
Revision Approach and Status document	Some of the components of the MERR Plan that were originally placed in the Bucket 3 have been moved to Bucket 2, specifically the prioritization components. Staff suggests updating the document to reflect this change.
<p>Does the Fish and Wildlife Committee support Staff suggestion to include these textual revisions in a November 2010 MERR Plan version?</p>	