

Revision Approach and Status for the Draft Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Reporting Plan

This document describes the revision process that will be followed in refining the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (Council) draft Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Reporting (MERR) Plan. The MERR Plan provides a monitoring, research and evaluation framework for the Program that will serve as a vehicle for adaptive management. The MERR Plan will assist the Council in assessing the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program (Program) progress and in better informing Council decisions.

The Council released the draft MERR Plan for public comment from March 15, 2010 until May 18, 2010; the Council also requested input from the Independent Scientific Advisory Board and Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISAB/ISRP) on the draft. [Comments were received](#) from 21 entities from the region, including the Council's Independent Scientific Advisory Board and Independent Scientific Review Panel. Comments were generally supportive and included technical, editorial, and policy comments to improve the draft MERR Plan.

To appropriately address these comments, the Fish and Wildlife Committee (Committee) approved a phased approach to revise the draft MERR Plan. This Revision Approach and Status document identifies which comments have been addressed to-date and incorporated in the latest draft MERR Plan ([November 2010 version](#)), and which remain to be addressed. This document also identifies how future revisions will be phased and accomplished.

During its June 2010 meeting, the Committee discussed and approved the following approach for revising the draft MERR Plan. First, comments received from the public and the ISAB/ISRP were subdivided into two broad categories, Technical and Editorial Comments and Policy Comments. The Committee agreed that staff would address the Technical and Editorial Comments in the July 2010 revision of the draft MERR Plan. Second, to ensure that the Policy Comments are addressed appropriately, the Committee approved the use of a three-phased approach. The three-phased approach consists of:

Bucket One - Short-Term

This Bucket contains policy comments that can be addressed by Council Members during summer 2010. Guidance received on these policy comments may be used as guidance during the RME+ categorical review if Council Members chose to approve as Council Policy.

Bucket Two - Mid-Term

This Bucket contains policy comments that can be addressed by Council Members in the interim between RME+ categorical review and the next Program amendment process.

Bucket Three - Long-term

This Bucket contains policy comments that can be addressed by Council Members during the next Program Amendment process.

Policy Comments placed in Bucket One were discussed during the June 2010 Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting. The Committee provided staff with guidance on how these should be addressed in the July 2010 revision of the draft MERR Plan version.

Policy Comments placed in Bucket One related to four themes: 1) use and meaning of the word “management” 2) the use of an analysis tool weighing risk and uncertainty to aid in prioritizing projects; 3) the relationship between MERR and Federal Columbia River Power Supply Biological Opinion (FCRPS BiOp); and 4) the review of High Level Indicator data. These were discussed during the June 2010 Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting. The Committee provided staff with guidance on how to address these issues, and these revisions are included in the July 2010 draft MERR.

In Bucket Two, the Committee identified the policy comments appropriate for a mid-term solution (i.e. the time frame between categorical review and program amendment) including framing of the Council’s management questions, and policy guidance on prioritization approach. In the November 2010 draft MERR Plan item 2.1 was addressed and additional changes were made to improve the clarity of the MERR Plan’s section on “Evaluation and Reporting Approach” and “Developing Implementation Strategies.” Staff continue to work on addressing the remaining items in Bucket Two.

Bucket Two - Address after RME Categorical Review and Prior to Program Amendment

2.1 Council Management Questions

- Discuss which format should be used for the Council’s management questions, e.g., Yes/No versus How?
- Consider expanding the topics covered by the Council’s management questions to include such topics as more resident fish (e.g., resident fish substitution), wildlife, habitat/ecosystem questions, FCRPS Biological Opinion and Recovery Plan management questions.

2.2 Program Objectives and Performance Standards

- Consider refining and expanding the RME Program objectives and performance standards.

2.3 Prioritization Approach for Research and Monitoring

- Organize a collaborative process prior to the next Program amendment to prioritize all of the Council Fish and Wildlife Program’s strategies and actions (i.e., on-the-ground actions) with the intent that this would aid in prioritizing the Program’s RME (e.g., biological objectives, performance standards, other prioritization tools).
- Consider modifying the Four-Tier and further discuss priority species and habitat characteristics, both of which may benefit from the outcome of the above collaborative process.
- Consider applying a top-down approach to prioritization, as well as using a budget to aid in prioritization.
- Consider developing policy guidance on ‘what is the desired size of the effect [for monitoring projects to] detect and at what level of confidence.’ For example, a 20% change with an 80% confidence level may be the target for monitoring some action types.

Issues requiring more time for input and resolution, such as the overall structure of MERR Plan and the development of new reporting forum are included in Bucket Three to be completed prior to the next Program amendment.

Bucket Three - Address During Program Amendment

3.1 MERR Plan Structure

- Consider integrating the Council's Research Plan within the MERR Plan so that there is one main document.
- Consider having the MERR Plan be a stand-alone guidance document and not integrating with the Program during the next amendment.

3.2 Reporting Forum in MERR Plan and Suggested in Comments

- Consider providing details on the purpose and audience of each reporting format and audience.

The Committee and staff will refine the approach to address Buckets Two and Three within the next 18 months. The approach will include further discussion with the region's managers and stakeholders, as needed, through focused meetings or online forums. In the interim, placeholders will be inserted while the other sections of the draft MERR Plan are being revised.

As the draft MERR Plan is revised to address both Technical and Editorial Comments and Policy Comments, its organization may evolve to best accommodate these revisions and to better reflect the policy decisions made by the Council. As items in Bucket Two and Three are addressed in future revisions of the MERR Plan the progress made will be summarized and added to this Revision Approach and Status document. The tentative timeline and process for addressing the Technical and Editorial Comments, the Policy Comments, revising the MERR Plan, and completing tasks specified in the MERR Plan is described below (Figure A). Once revisions are completed and supporting appendices developed, the MERR Plan will undergo ISAB/ISRP review for assessment of its scientific integrity and its alignment with the Program.

The MERR Plan, although created as a stand-alone document to support the Program, will be considered for incorporation into the Program's section on research, monitoring, evaluation and reporting during the next Program amendment process scheduled from September 2012 to January 2014. As the MERR Plan is intended to remain flexible and to evolve in response to lessons learned, whereas the Program remains stable for the duration of its adoption period, only components of the MERR that are likely to remain stable will be considered for incorporation into the next Program.

Once these three-phases of revisions and the tasks specified in the MERR Plan are completed, the MERR Plan will not become a static document. Instead, the MERR Plan will be a living document and will be updated as needed. The main two components of the MERR Plan, Strategic Plan and Implementation Framework, will be reviewed along with the Program on a 5-year time period. The Implementation Strategies, appended to the MERR Plan, will be available for updates on an annual basis to facilitate applying what is learned to improve Program implementation. Requests for updates can originate from the Council or from the Basin's fish

and wildlife managers and other stakeholders. The Council's Fish and Wildlife Division will be responsible for incorporating updates as provided by the region. Following substantial changes to MERR Plan components, the Council may request that the ISAB/ISRP review to ensure that the revisions do not negatively affect the MERR Plan's scientific integrity and alignment with the Program.

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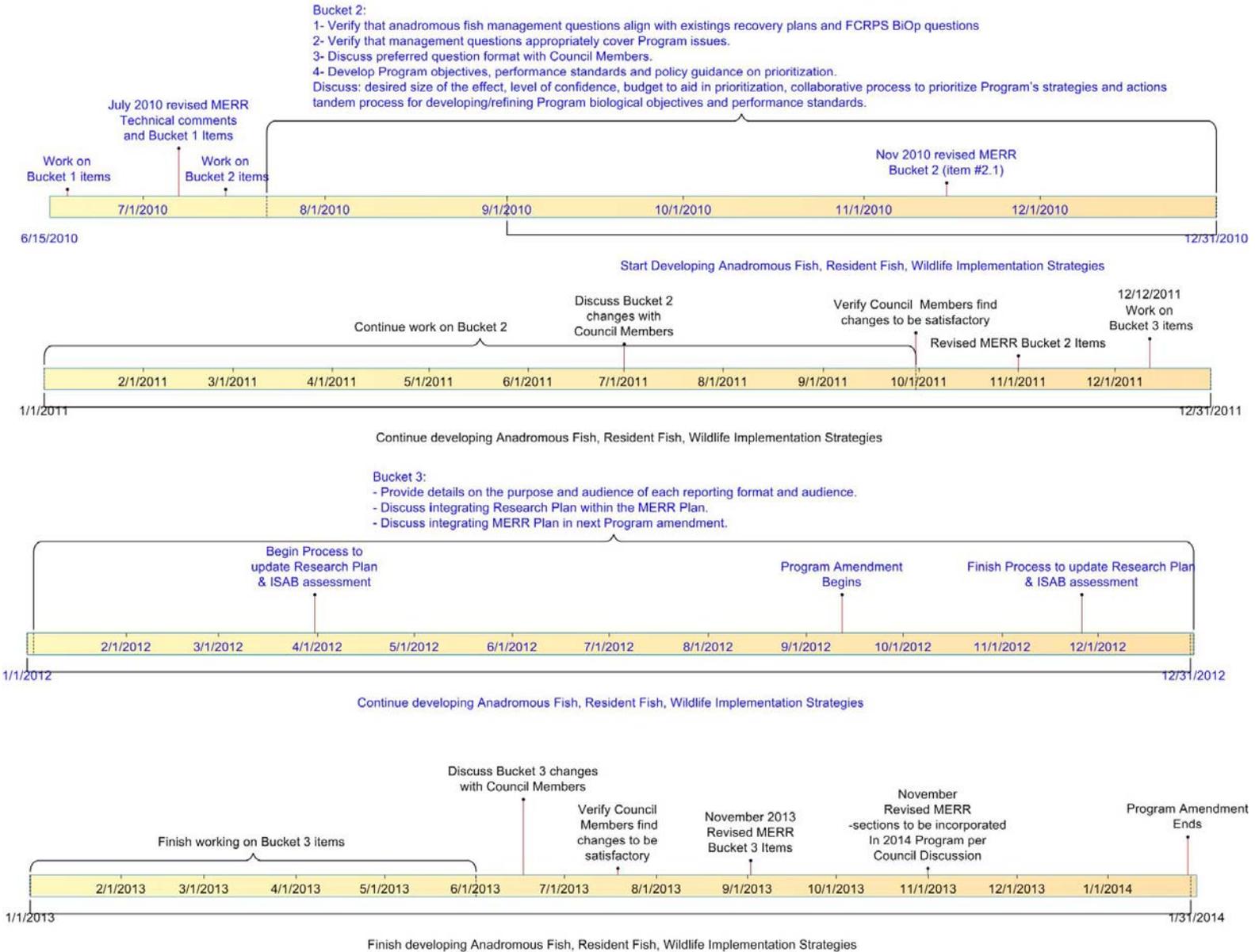


Figure A: MERR Plan's work plan that illustrates the tasks and their tentative timeline.