Northwest Power and Conservation Council

June 30th, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee Members

FROM: Lynn Palensky

SUBJECT: Discussion of upcoming category reviews for Data Management, Program Coordination, and Resident Fish/Blocked Areas

Staff will provide an update to the Committee on progress made in the planning phase of the upcoming reviews to include:

- Schedule and process
- Project portfolios
- Announcements (communications with proponents)
- Discussion of overarching principles and objectives for the reviews

As background, the attached document includes program language on resident fish, program coordination, and data management. You will see some key principles in this language that provide the overarching guidance for staff as we proceed with planning; the ISRP in their reviews; and the project proponents as they plan for future work. In the planning phase, staff continues to develop the details using the guidance provided in the program.

Attachment

w:\lp\packet materials\2011\july\update on upcoming reviews.docx

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Program Language
Resident Fish, Data Management and Program Coordination

The focus of the Program and the Council now turns to performance. The 2009 Program renews the emphasis on periodic scientific review of new and ongoing actions; increases requirements for reporting of results and accountability; emphasizes adaptive management as a way to solve continuing uncertainties; renews the push to develop a better set of quantitative objectives for the regional Program; commits to a periodic and systematic exchange of science and policy information; and expands the monitoring and evaluation framework with a commitment to use the information to make better decisions and report frequently on Program progress. *(Program: Page 4*)

A. Resident Fish

Substitution for Anadromous Fish Losses

The following principles guide mitigation requirements for anadromous fish losses in all blocked areas resulting from development and operation of hydroelectric facilities:

- Investigate reintroduction of anadromous fish into blocked areas.
- Restore and increase the abundance of native resident fish species throughout their historic ranges when original habitat conditions exist or can be feasibly restored or improved.
- Develop and increase opportunities for consumptive and non-consumptive resident fisheries for native, introduced, wild, and hatchery-reared stocks that are compatible with the continued persistence of native resident fish species and their restoration to near their historic abundance.
- When full mitigation by improving the abundance of native fish species is not feasible, manage nonnative fish to maximize use of available existing and improved habitats, while complementing state and local regulations, in order to provide a subsistence and sport-fishing resource, without adversely affecting native fish populations.

Resident Fish Losses - Objectives to address losses:

The following objectives address resident fish losses:

- Complete resident fish loss assessment using agreed upon methodology and prioritization of an assessment.
- Maintain and restore healthy ecosystems and watersheds
- Protect and expand habitat and ecosystem functions in order to increase the abundance, productivity, and life history diversity of resident fish
- Achieve within 100 years population characteristics of resident fish species that represent on average full mitigation for losses of resident fish.

Resident Fish Mitigation and Crediting

Resident fish loss assessments resulting from the construction of hydroelectric facilities have generally been quantified in terms of acres or stream miles of key habitat for focal species inundated or blocked. Such losses are most effectively mitigated by acquiring interests in real property for the primary purpose of preserving, enhancing, restoring, and/or creating fish and wildlife habitat equal to the quantity and quality of habitat lost. In areas where construction and inundation losses have been assessed and quantified by the appropriate agencies and tribes, mitigation should occur through the acquisition of appropriate interests in real property at a minimum ratio of 1:1 mitigation to lost distance or area.

Resident Fish Substitution
The following principles should guide decisions on mitigation strategies to address anadromous fish losses in blocked areas, including the use of resident fish substitution:

- Investigate reintroduction of anadromous fish into blocked areas.
- Restore and increase the abundance of native resident fish species throughout their historic ranges when original habitat conditions exist or can be feasibly restored or improved.
- Develop and increase opportunities for consumptive and non-consumptive resident fisheries for native, introduced, wild, and hatchery-reared stocks that are compatible with the continued persistence of native resident fish species and their restoration to near their historic abundance.
- When full mitigation by improving the abundance of native fish species is not feasible, manage non-native fish to maximize use of available existing and improved habitats, consistent with state and local regulations, to provide a subsistence and sport-fishing resource, without adversely affecting native fish populations.
- All proposals for ongoing or new resident fish substitution projects that involve or might involve a non-native species should include an environmental risk assessment of potential negative impacts on native fish species. The Independent Scientific Advisory Board recommended a template for such an environmental risk assessment. Starting with that template, the Council will work with the Independent Scientific Review Panel and the appropriate fish and wildlife agencies and tribes to develop the final environmental risk assessment template. In developing the appropriate template, the Council will consider the criteria currently being used by managers to assess the consequences of substitution in light of the Program's subbasin and basinwide objectives.

Resident Fish Mitigation Settlement Agreements
Whenever possible, resident fish mitigation via habitat acquisitions should take place through long-term agreements that, as with wildlife mitigation agreements, have clear objectives, a plan for action over time, a committed level of funding that provides a substantial likelihood of achieving and sustaining the stated wildlife mitigation objectives, and provisions to ensure effective implementation with periodic monitoring and evaluation. Agreements include a management plan to sustain the minimum credited habitat values for the life of the project and will come with adequate funding for O&M to sustain mitigation objectives. See the Program for detailed components of such an agreement.

Specific Objectives and Performance stand for Habitat Characteristic and for population performance -- see p 37-39: a. Mainstem habitat conditions & b. Resident fish and wildlife

B. Data Management - summary
The Program describes specific programmatic needs that can be applied to our current portfolio of projects engaged in data management analysis and dissemination. The program calls for the Council to:

- Manage stock composition and stock-specific abundance, escapement, catch, and age distribution data so that it can be easily integrated and readily available in real time.
- Develop a common data base for tracking, assigning and recording habitat units for wildlife.
- Provide timely dissemination of harvest-related information in a publicly accessible manner.
- Identify priority data gaps and make efforts to eliminate redundant monitoring and evaluation.

- Develop Council-approved guidelines for consistent methods to collect or identify data appropriate for tracking focal fish species and ecosystem variables.
- All monitoring and evaluation data and information (including raw data and reports) funded under the Program are considered in the public domain and must be made readily available to all interested parties in an agreed-upon electronic format.
    - Make available to the public all key monitoring data that is used to evaluation and adaptively manage the program in an agreed-upon electronic format.
    - Include data that is collected on anadromous and resident fish, wildlife and habitat to help inform the Council's decisions.
    - The Council will collaborate with interested parties to establish an integrated internet-based system for disseminating data relevant to this Fish and Wildlife Program
    - Data sites must be adaptively managed to stay current with the evolving needs of users in the Columbia River Basin.
    - Data and metadata must be compiled, analyzed, and reported annually and within six months of project completion.
- Coordinate with organizations that track and monitor data on non-native species distribution, climate and human population change at the Northwest regional scale.

C. Program Coordination

The Council benefits from the coordinated efforts of many groups, committees and organizations in implementing the Council's Program on an ongoing basis. Continued coordination of various Program elements is expected, supported, and in some cases financed by Bonneville. The elements below represent the key areas in which the Council seeks continued coordinated efforts from fish and wildlife managers and interested parties throughout the region. Coordination funding should be focused on the following activities that support Program implementation:

☐ Data management (storage, management, and reporting)

☐ Monitoring and evaluation (framework and approach)

☐ Developing and tracking biological objectives

☐ Review of technical documents and processes

☐ Project proposal review

☐ Coordination of projects, programs and funding sources within subbasins

☐ Facilitating and participating in focus workgroups on Program issues

☐ Information dissemination (technical, policy, and outreach)

Any entity or organization receiving funding for coordination of Program activities must develop a work plan detailing the coordination elements, objectives, deliverables, and budget. All coordination work will be reviewed as part of the Council's project review process and as necessary, scientific and administrative review. The Council will recommend to Bonneville the level and type of coordination required to implement the Program.