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August 4, 2015

### DECISION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council members

**FROM:** Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

**SUBJECT:** Follow-up action on Accord Project #2007-156-00, *Rock Creek Fish and Habitat Assessment*

**PROPOSED ACTION:** The Fish and Wildlife Committee recommends that the Council support the project for continued implementation.

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The proposed action will address conditions that the Council placed on the project in previous reviews.

### BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The Accord budget for this project is approximately \$3,191,127 (i.e., it ranges from \$231,914 to \$354,929 per year) in expense funds for Fiscal Years 2008 through 2017. The current contract associated with this project totals \$299,665 and has a performance period of June 1, 2014 to May 31, 2015. In addition there is a contract request for \$337,827 (CR-284229) with a start date of June 1, 2015 and an end date of May 31, 2016.

### BACKGROUND

The Rock Creek project (Yakama Nation, Project #2007-156-00, *Rock Creek Fish and Habitat Assessment for the Prioritization of Restoration and Protection*<sup>1</sup>) was first submitted as part of the FY 2007 - 2009 review. The goal of the Rock Creek project is to address the needs for the Eastern Tributary Subbasins Recovery Plan objectives

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<sup>1</sup> Short description of the project: Information will be collected on the abundance, growth, genetics, diseases, habitat condition, and movement of salmonids in Rock Creek, a unique watershed of the middle Columbia River.

associated with Middle Columbia River steelhead<sup>2</sup>. The assessment will gather information of the anadromous species (steelhead, fall Chinook and coho) in the drainage, habitat conditions, identify limiting factors, and define a prioritized list of actions to protect and restore stream reaches.

As part of the FY 2007 - 2009 review the ISRP provided a “*fundable in part*” review and stated the following.

*The proposal has many objectives and it is expected that this ambitious project should generate much information that would be useful to others in the region. However, there is a need to prioritize among the objectives and work in a logical sequence that allows planning and funding to proceed in stages. The ISRP recommends that objectives that relate to obtaining access, assessing fish population abundance and productivity, and assessing habitat be supported.*

Based on this ISRP review the Council recommended the following.

*ISRP fund in part: recommend the work elements identified as fundable by the ISRP. Address ISRP concerns in statement of workplan during contracting.*

On May 2, 2008, Bonneville entered into a memorandum of agreement with the Yakama Nation that included this project.

In 2010 and 2011 the Council conducted a category review associated with Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RM&E) and Artificial Production projects in the Program. Included in this review was the Rock Creek. As part of the preliminary ISRP review (ISRP document 2010-33) and final ISRP review (ISRP document 2010-44B) the project received a “*Does Not Meet Scientific Review Criteria*” and the Council provided no recommendation for the project as part of the category review and requested that the sponsor submit a new proposal for review.

On May 23, 2011, the Council received a revised proposal from Bonneville and the Yakama Nation, and on July 14, 2011 the Council received the review from the ISRP (ISRP document 2011-19). The ISRP found that the proposal “*Does not meet scientific review criteria.*”

On February 2, 2012, the Council received a revised narrative from Bonneville intended to address the ISRP’s concerns raised as part of their previous reviews. On March 12, 2012 the Council received the ISRP review (ISRP document 2012-4). The ISRP found that the revised proposal “meets scientific review criteria – in part (qualified)”. The “in part” recommendation was associated with the genetic work not being justified, and “qualification” aspects of the review requested additional information and analysis for incorporation into reports and plans to assist in the implementation of the anticipated restoration actions. In discussions with the Yakama Nation the

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<sup>2</sup> National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-Fisheries’ *Recovery Plan for the Rock Creek Population of Middle Columbia River Steelhead*.

necessary reports and plans to assist in the implementation of restoration actions would be available for ISRP review and a Council recommendation in 2014.

The project participated in the Geographic Review of 2013 and in November, based on the ISRP review (ISRP document 2013-11) of the project proposal, the Council provided the following recommendation

*Implement with conditions through June 2014. Sponsor to submit geomorphology and salmonid assessment report to the ISRP when completed by March 1, 2014. Funding recommendation beyond June 2014 dependent on favorable ISRP review and Council recommendation.*

On April 2, 2015, the Council received from Bonneville and the YN a submittal intended to address the conditions placed on the project as part of the Geographic Review. On the July 1, 2015 the ISRP provided their review (ISRP document 2015-6). The ISRP found that the project “meets scientific review criteria”.

## **ANALYSIS**

The ISRP stated that the Yakama Nation has addressed the issues raised in the previous ISRP review (i.e., ISRP documents 2012-4 and 2013-11) and comment on the comprehensive nature of the proposal and on the status of Rock Creek’s habitat and steelhead.

It is important to note that Rock Creek is of great cultural significance to the Yakama Nation, and to the Kah-milt pa Band (one of the signatory tribes and bands to the Treaty of 1855) in particular. As noted by the YN, Rock Creek has some fundamental streamflow limitations from ground water withdrawals and the increasing demand for ground water in the subbasin. The favorable reviewed assessment and analysis is intended to guide actions to preservation and enhance instream flows that are critical to unique life histories of salmon and steelhead in the culturally important Rock Creek.

Based on the extensive ISRP reviews the Fish and Wildlife Committee recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee support this project for continued implementation.