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November 8, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Mark Walker, Director of Public Affairs

SUBJECT: Draft Regional Invasive Mussel Prevention Forum Charter

BACKGROUND:

Presenters: Mark Walker, Leslie Bach, Jim Ruff

Summary: Staff distributed the draft forum charter at the October meeting that prompted an initial discussion about the workings and need for such an entity. When there was no consensus among Members as to whether such a forum was necessary, the Committee decided to more closely review and consider the proposal and take the issue up again at the November meeting.

Relevance: The Council's Fish and Wildlife Program encourages a regional approach to establishing a defensive perimeter to keep invasive mussels out of Columbia River Basin waters. The program specifically identifies the need to coordinate and share tracking and monitoring data on invasive mussels in the Columbia Basin and data on rapid response, prevention, monitoring, containment, control, eradication, enforcement and education and outreach efforts among a variety of organizations.

Background: Each of the Northwest states has established watercraft inspection and decontamination stations throughout the region to prevent the introduction and establishment of invasive mussels in the waters of the Columbia River Basin. In 2014, Congress passed new authorization for the U.S. Corps of

Engineers that included a provision giving the Corps legal authority to enter into cost sharing agreements with the four Northwest states to establish and operate watercraft inspection stations.

During the Council staff's initial interaction with the Corps, a Corps employee from the Northwestern Division suggested that the creation of a regional forum focused solely on invasive quagga and zebra mussels and the operation of watercraft inspection stations would be most helpful in providing review and oversight of the regional inspection station program, as well as in convincing Corps headquarters in Washington, DC that the program is vitally important to the region and in the Corps' best long-term interest. Currently, the Corps is putting the finishing touches on a *letter report* that we expect to be released in draft form in a week or two.

The *letter report* is the official document prepared by the region that will be sent to Corps headquarters as justification for the Corps' participation in negotiating cost sharing agreements with the four states. It is hoped that the agreements can be finalized prior to the start of the "watercraft migration season" that will begin in late February at some locations when boats start to return from the Southwest, the Great Lakes, and other infested areas in the U.S. and Canada for the spring and summer boating season in the Northwest.

Additional Information:

As was noted during the Committee's October discussion, there are several entities already established in the West that deal with invasive mussels and other aquatic invasive species. The important distinctions between those groups and the proposed forum are as follows:

- All the existing entities deal with broader sets of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species and related issues and are not focused solely on invasive mussels or establishment of the most effective watercraft inspection stations in the Columbia River Basin.
- Participants in existing organizations are largely technical staff. It is foreseen that the proposed Regional Invasive Mussel Prevention Forum would also have the participation, review and input of policy level people.
- The primary focus of the proposed forum would be on establishing, monitoring, and assessing the effectiveness of a defensive perimeter around the region to protect the Northwest from an invasive mussel infestation via watercraft from other parts of the U.S. and Canada. **No other invasive species group is currently charged with this function.**
- An additional, critical function of the forum would be to share information and data among participants, review information on the annual watercraft inspection station network in the Northwest, draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the states' and Corps' expenditures, and potentially make recommendations for the targeting of future expenditures. The Corps and the Northwest states would be in a position to take this information into account during their internal budgeting and annual watercraft inspection station staffing and expenditure processes.

- Ideally, the establishment and operation of the this uniquely specialized forum would help ensure the annual continuance of the Corps' multi-million dollar contribution to the states' efforts to protect the Columbia Basin and its public infrastructure from an infestation of invasive mussels.

On November 2nd, Guy Norman and Council central staff met with Dave Ponganis and Rock Peters from the Corps' Northwestern Division to discuss progress on the *letter report*. Representatives from Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and PNWER also participated. During the meeting Ponganis was asked whether he supported the creation of such a forum. He appeared to not have been familiar with the idea, but said that he thought it could be helpful. He cautioned, however, that the Corps' participation would be contingent on identifying funding in the Corps budget.

D R A F T

Regional Invasive Mussel Prevention Forum

Introduction

Non-native and invasive species pose direct threats to the region's fish and wildlife restoration efforts. The Council's 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program states that aquatic invasive species (AIS) imperil native species in the Pacific Northwest's ecosystems through predation, competition for food, interbreeding, disease transmission, food web disruption, and physical habitat alteration. In addition, AIS can invade and significantly threaten infrastructure at hydroelectric dams, fish passage facilities, and water supplies for hatcheries, agriculture, municipalities and industries in the Columbia River Basin. The focus of this forum is on zebra and quagga mussels (*Dreissenid* sp.) which are currently the greatest known AIS threat in the Columbia River Basin. If these invasive mussels establish themselves in any part of the Columbia River Basin, then it is likely only a matter of time before they spread and impact the entire basin, causing hundreds of millions of dollars of damage annually.

Each of the four Northwest states has an aquatic nuisance species management plan and each state has been implementing strategies to prevent mussels from entering the Columbia River Basin. At the federal level, the Water Resources and Reform Development Act of 2014 (Section 1039(d); Public Law 113-121) tasked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with partnering with the four Northwest states to establish watercraft inspection stations to prevent the spread of invasive mussels in the Columbia River Basin. Similarly, British Columbia and western Canada, through the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, are engaged in invasive mussel prevention efforts where the Columbia River Basin is shared by the U.S. and Canada. Other entities involved in some manner with Pacific Northwest invasive mussel prevention efforts include the 100th Meridian Initiative-Columbia Basin Team, the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, the Western Regional Panel, and the state Invasive Species Councils. More information about each of these groups can be found in the Appendix.

The Council's Fish and Wildlife Program encourages a regional approach to establishing a defensive perimeter to keep invasive mussels out of Columbia River Basin waters. The program specifically identifies the need to coordinate and share tracking and monitoring data on invasive mussels in the Columbia Basin and data on rapid response, prevention, monitoring, containment, control, eradication, enforcement and education and outreach efforts between a variety of organizations. The Program also states that regional prevention and management efforts for aquatic invasive species should aim to: (1) detect the presence of these species early and respond rapidly; (2) educate the public; and (3) prevent, monitor, control, and stop or minimize the spread of non-native and invasive species where these pose both a direct threat to the hydropower system, to native fish, or to wildlife species. The entities involved in Columbia River Basin invasive mussel prevention efforts agree there is a need for a forum for representatives to come together to coordinate and assess the overall efficacy of their efforts in the basin to date.

Forum Tasks

This following is a set of organizing concepts for organizing the coordinating forum. The forum would not be organized as a Council advisory committee; the forum is not making recommendations to the Council for Council decisions nor is it under direct Council control. Rather, the Council will host the forum, provide logistical support and provide a coordinating function for the region.

The following is a set of tasks the Council expects the forum to be involve in, subject to revision by the forum itself:

- Assist in the coordination of the efforts by federal, state, tribal, local government, and provincial entities (governmental and non-governmental) to protect the Columbia River Basin from invasive mussels.
- Encourage and assist in the mutual sharing of data and information on protection efforts, including actions taken, costs, and the results and efficacy of efforts including watercraft inspections.
- Report on the strategies and effectiveness of watercraft inspection stations in the four Pacific Northwest states established pursuant to section 1039(d) of the Water Resources and Reform Development Act of 2014, Public Law 113-121.
- Evaluate and make recommendations to federal government agencies, as requested, concerning the most effective and efficient use of available funds for invasive mussel prevention efforts.
- Share, evaluate and report on the status of emergency response plans to deal with invasive mussels should they be found in the Columbia River Basin.
- Identify and share information on best practices for protection, containment and control of invasive mussels.
- Collaborate and report on public education and outreach efforts to keep invasive mussels out of the Columbia River Basin.
- Coordinate regional efforts to develop additional long-term funding sources for invasive mussel prevention and protection efforts in the Columbia River Basin.
- Encourage research on potential ecological impacts of invasive mussels on salmon and steelhead habitat.

Forum Participants

The forum shall be open to all interested entities and individuals. It is anticipated the forum may include representatives from state agencies involved with AIS prevention, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, NOAA Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, Pacific Northwest Economic Region, Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, Columbia Basin Trust, utilities and other organizations involved in AIS prevention in the Columbia River Basin.

The Council will host the forum as well as participate and provide logistical support.

Forum Operating Rules

At the first meeting of the forum, the forum should select its chair as well as whatever other leadership roles it needs. At the first meeting, the forum should also discuss any operational guidelines it wishes to set for its meetings.

The forum, through its Chair, shall be responsible for setting the agendas for meetings of the forum.

Appendix – List of Other Entities Involved in Pacific Northwest Dreissenid Mussel Prevention

100th Meridian Initiative-Columbia Basin Team: This is a cooperative effort between local, state, provincial, regional and federal agencies, and tribal sovereign nations within the Columbia River Basin. The Team is administered and coordinated by PSMFC, with support from the USFWS, to prevent the westward spread of invasive mussels as well as other aquatic and terrestrial invasive species in North America. This group meets twice annually. It provides technical coordination for dreissenid rapid response planning and exercises, potential control methods and information sharing. See http://www.100thmeridian.org/Columbia_RBT.asp

Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF): An interagency task force established in 1991, it is co-chaired by the USFWS and NOAA. It meets twice annually and consists of 13 federal members and 13 ex officio members, and has six regional panels. The ANSTF supports the work of the regional panels, approves state and interstate aquatic nuisance species management plans, and implements a national aquatic nuisance species program and the 100th Meridian Initiative. This group promoted the development of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans, developed and approved the Quagga-Zebra Mussel Action Plan (QZAP) for western U.S. waters, and developed best management practices associated with aquatic nuisance species. See <http://www.anstaskforce.gov/default.php>

Western Regional Panel (WRP): This is a non-governmental advisory body, consisting of 19 western states and Guam, to the ANSTF that assists in coordinating activities on all aquatic nuisance species in the West. Its mission is to protect western aquatic resources by preventing the introduction and spread of non-native invasive or nuisance species into western marine, estuarine and freshwater systems through the coordinated management and research activities of state, tribal, federal, commercial, environmental, research entities, industries, and the other regional panels. The WRP leads the Building Consensus in the West committee, has conducted a gap analysis of model AIS laws and regulations, contributes to updating watercraft inspection and decontamination training manuals, provides both internal and external outreach, and is advancing sampling lab standards and quality control for detection of aquatic invasive species. It is also working with the recreational marine industry to inform boat and motor designs to reduce the transport and spread of aquatic invasive species. See <http://www.fws.gov/answest/>

Invasive Species Councils: The Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington Invasive Species Councils, together with the Invasive Species Councils of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, work on common messaging and signage to advance invasive species prevention efforts. Some examples of joint campaigns include *Buy It Where You Burn It* (for firewood), *Squeal on Pigs* (for feral swine), and *Clean, Drain and Dry* (for aquatic invasives).

Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER): This is a public/private nonprofit organization created in 1991. It includes membership from state, provincial, and territorial legislators (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Washington, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon) committed to working on issues across borders. The PNWER has established an Invasive Species Working Group.