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December 6, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council members

FROM: Tony Grover

SUBJECT: Presentation by Action Agencies on the 'Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement' process

BACKGROUND:

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bonneville Power Administration, referred to as the Action Agencies, intend to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the Columbia River System operations and configurations for 14 federal projects in the interior Columbia Basin.

In this Columbia River System Operations EIS, the three agencies will present a reasonable range of alternatives for long-term system operations and evaluate the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts on flood risk management, irrigation, power generation, navigation, fish and wildlife, cultural resources and recreation. The Action Agencies will serve as joint-lead agencies in developing the EIS.

Comments received during the public scoping period (September 30, 2016-January 17, 2017) provides anyone who is interested an opportunity to help the agencies identify issues and concerns that could be analyzed in the EIS.

Presenters: David Kennedy, Bonneville Power Administration; Rebecca Weiss, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and Sonja Kokos Bureau of Reclamation

Summary: David, Rebecca and Sonja are the agency leads for the team developing the EIS. They will describe the process, what the next steps will be, considerations for development of alternatives and anticipated timelines.

Relevance: For more than 30 years, the measures incorporated into the Council's Fish and Wildlife program (program) have altered the Columbia River Hydrosystem (system) operations for the benefit of improved habitat conditions and fish passage survival. As relevant to species listed under the Endangered Species Act, these measures have largely been incorporated into the 2014 Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (FCRPS BiOp). The region is looking to the Council's program to investigate the potential for additional gains in ecosystem function and floodplain connectivity.

Background: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bonneville Power Administration operate, maintain, market and transmit hydroelectric power from 14 federal multiple purpose dams and related facilities located throughout the Columbia River basin.

On May 4, 2016, United States District Judge Michael H. Simon ruled the action agencies, defendants, did violate the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 by failing to prepare an EIS in connection with their records of decision implementing the 73 reasonable and prudent alternatives described in the 2014 FCRPS BiOp.

In response to the ruling, the action agencies have embarked on the Columbia River Systems Operations EIS process for the FCRPS that is anticipated to take about 5 years to complete.

More Info: <http://www.crso.info/>



Columbia River System Operations EIS

Columbia River System Environmental Impact Statement Current Status

Agency Leads

Rebecca Weiss, USACE

Sonja Kokos, BOR

David Kennedy, BPA



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
Northwestern Division





Columbia River System Operations EIS

Background

Judge Simon's Order in *NWF v. NMFS*

- June 2016

New Biological Opinions

- December 2018 Based on invalidated FCRPS NMFS 2014 BiOp
- Potentially, NEW BiOp concurrent with conclusion of a NEPA process in 2021

New Columbia River System Operations EIS

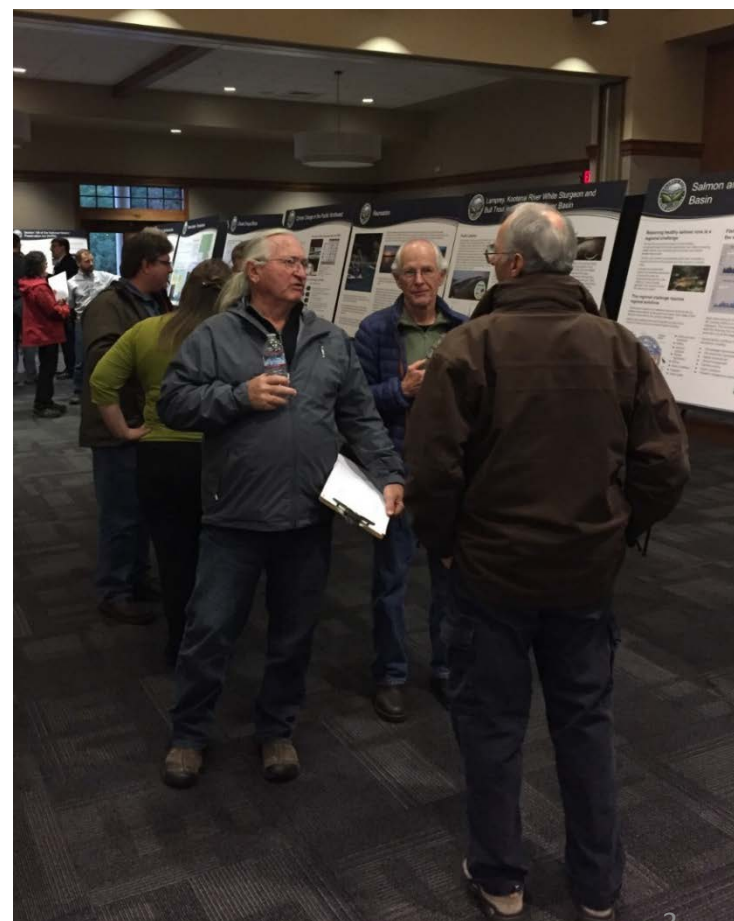
- Evaluating ***alternatives*** and trade offs (including climate change and dam breaching) ***and effects on resources*** (including ESA-listed species, cultural resources, and economics)
- EIS scoping phase now, more than 16 public meetings scheduled
- Status report to court November 2017
- Draft EIS March 2020
- Final EIS March 2021



Columbia River System Operations EIS

Current Status for the CRSO EIS

- Scoping meetings began Oct. 24
 - Hear from public on what the agencies should evaluate
 - Includes disclosure of how the current system operates and the resources involved
- 16 public meetings in all four states—over 2000 attendees so far
- Two webinars were held in early December for people who can't make the public meetings.

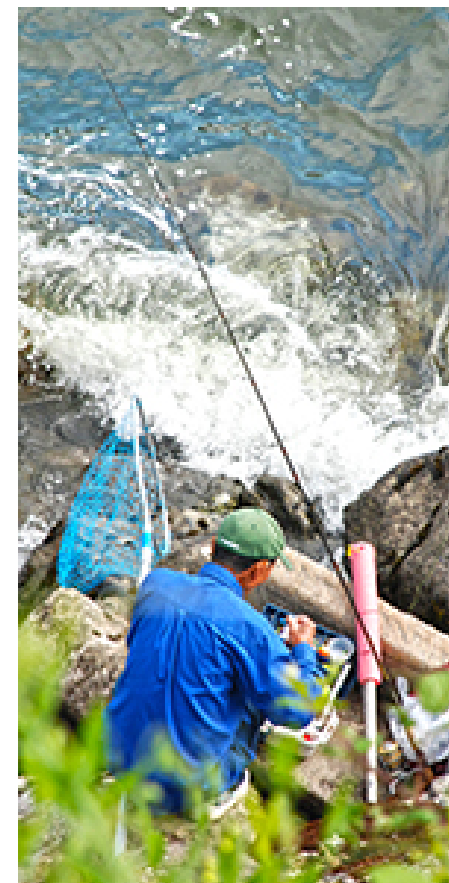




Columbia River System Operations EIS

NEPA Next Steps for the CRSO EIS

- The federal agencies will process all of the information gathered during scoping.
- Using scoping information, alternatives will be developed for the EIS assessments.
- Metrics to evaluate will be identified and any tools to complete the evaluation will be developed or data collected as necessary.
- A status report on NEPA is due to the court in Oct. 30, 2017, and a status conference is set for Nov. 30, 2017.





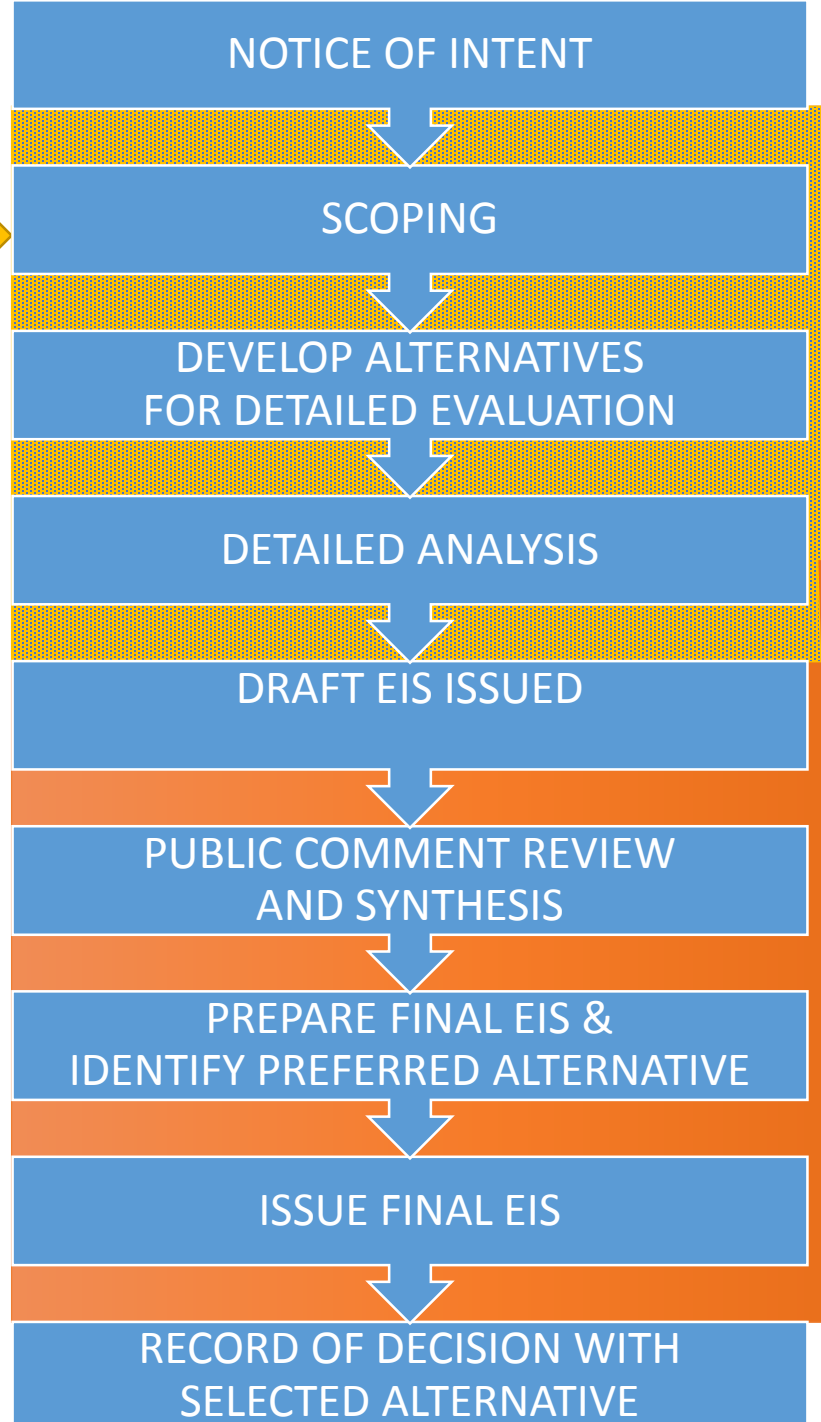
Columbia River System Operations EIS

Summary of Interests to Date

- Remove the lower Snake River dams for fish passage.
- Protect the dams for irrigation, flood risk management, navigation, and recreation.
- Complete economic analysis of changes to operations or structural configuration and the benefits/impacts of those changes.
- Remove the dams, so orcas will not starve.
- Do not do another study.
- Use the best available science in the study.

Columbia River System EIS Process Flow Chart

WE ARE HERE



**Tribal
Engagement/Consultation
with Tribes**

Scope of Study
Tribes and States
Cooperating Agencies
Federal Agencies
Interest Groups
General Public





Columbia River System Operations EIS

Comment Period ends January 17, 2017

- For more information about the Columbia River System Operations EIS, please visit www.crso.info or call 1-800-290-5033. Comments will not be accepted over the phone.
- Comments will be accepted through January 17, 2017, and can be submitted through the online comment form, via email at comment@crso.info, or mailed to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Attn: CRSO EIS, P.O. Box 2870, Portland, Oregon 97208-2870.
- When submitting comments, please be aware that your entire comment, including your name, address, and email will become part of the public record.

QUESTIONS?

