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July 30, 2013

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council decision on Project #2012-013-00, *Snake River Fall Chinook Monitoring and Evaluation*, a BiOp project.

PROPOSED ACTION: The Council staff recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee recommend to the Council implementation of this project. This recommendation is conditioned that the NPT and the WDFW address the ISRP comments in their final project report in 2017.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Currently, the project has outlined an expense budget of \$971,393 for Fiscal Year 2013 through 2017. The Fiscal Year budgets for this period range from \$177,297 to \$224,428. The project also has a confirmed \$107,198 cost share with Idaho Power in Fiscal Year 2013 for start-up equipment¹.

BACKGROUND

On June 10, 2013, Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) submitted a hatchery RM&E proposal to investigate the effects of the Snake River fall Chinook (SRFC) hatchery program on natural-origin SRFC productivity for Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) review. This project was developed by the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to assist in satisfying commitments under the 2008 Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (BiOp). Under Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) Actions 64 and 65 of the BiOp, the Action Agencies (AAs) committed to investigate these effects on the natural origin fall Chinook.

¹ Radio tags and receivers.

The proposed project has two objectives that are intended to determine fidelity to release location of adults returning from acclimated and direct released subyearling smolts, and to quantify fallback at Lower Granite Dam (LGD) of adults returning from releases of yearling and subyearling smolts, with emphasis on returns from releases at Lyons Ferry Hatchery. The Snake River fall Chinook hatchery programs were developed to mitigate for the effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). The purposes of these hatchery programs are intended to supplement the natural spawning component of Snake River fall Chinook (SRFC) and provide for continued fisheries within and outside of the Snake River basin. The proposal was developed to better understand the behavior and spatial distribution of returning adults from subyearling and yearling smolt releases and the relationship to natural productivity. This need was identified during Hatchery Genetic Management Plan (HGMP) consultation with NOAA Fisheries for ESA coverage for the hatchery programs to address the uncertainties regarding hatchery fall Chinook spawning naturally (pHOS - percentage of hatchery origin spawners) and the potential risk to productivity and the feasibility of altering pHOS via modified hatchery release locations if needed.

On July 10, 2013 the Council received the ISRP review (ISRP document 2013-6). The ISRP found that the proposal meets scientific criteria (qualified). No public comments have been received on the ISRP reviews.

ANALYSIS

As part of their review the ISRP stated the importance of this proposal and effective way it built upon previous and ongoing efforts. As part of their review the ISRP provided extensive comments intended to strengthen the proposal's study design. These comments form the qualification that the ISRP requested (i.e., that the NPT and the WDFW consider the comments while they finalize their planning, and during implementation and reporting of their finding of this project).

This project will be beneficial to the management of the fall Chinook hatcheries in the Snake River Basin. This is especially true since the current spawning areas used by fall Chinook are not isolated and though the fish released from the hatcheries have relatively strong fidelity (e.g., yearling smolt releases) to their release location there is a measurable amount of interchange of fish especially for the subyearling smolt releases. The information to be gained will be very helpful towards the management of these integrated hatchery programs and wild fall Chinook salmon natural production.

In addition, it is important to note that the proposal is closely associated with several ongoing fall Chinook artificial propagation projects funded through the direct Fish and Wildlife Program² and

² Project #1983-350-00, *Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Operations and Maintenance (O&M)*; Project # 1983-350-03, *Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)*; Project #2002-032-00, *Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon Life History Investigations*; Project #1998-010-05, *Fall Chinook Acclimation Facilities on Snake/Clearwater Rivers*.

the “reimbursable” program through the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan Program (LSRCP)³.

Based on the ISRP review, the Council staff recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee recommends that the Council support implementation of this project. This recommendation is conditioned that the NPT and the WDFW address the ISRP comments in their final project report in 2017.

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³ Lyons Ferry Hatchery - the LSRCP program is not part of what is considered the traditional “direct program” funded by Bonneville. Historically, the program (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) received annual congressional appropriations, and Bonneville reimbursed the Treasury for those appropriations.