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April 2, 2009

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council decision on Project # 2009-001-00, *Expanded Multi-Species Acclimation in the Wenatchee/Methow Basins*, a Columbia Basin Fish Accord project.

PROPOSED ACTION: The Council staff recommends that the Council support this project with the understanding that implementation of the action be dependant on the outcome of the proposed planning effort and future review by the ISRP and Council.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The total amount associated with this accord project equals \$4,845,345 (e.g., approximately \$365,811 to \$548,281 per year¹) in expense funds for Fiscal Years 2008 through 2017. The capital associated with the project is \$850,000. A contract (#41799) is pending with a performance period of March 15, 2009 to February 28, 2010 at \$143,389.

BACKGROUND

In May 2008, Bonneville, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation signed agreements with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation (CTWSRO), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN), the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the states of Idaho and Montana to implement a set of projects and actions that will deliver specific, scientifically sound results for the region's fish and wildlife. Collectively these agreements are known as the Columbia Basin Fish Accords.

As with all projects in the Fish and Wildlife Program, the Accord projects are subject to scientific review by the ISRP. As outlined in the guidance document associated with the review process for the Accords, the Council recognizes Bonneville's commitments to the projects under the Accords. However, the Accords do not alter the Council's responsibilities with respect to

¹ Includes the anticipated 2.5-percent annual inflation adjustment, beginning in Fiscal Year 2010.

ISRP review or the Council's role following ISRP review. Consequently, the Council will provide its recommendation on each project based on full consideration of the ISRP report and the Council's Program.

On February 24, 2009, the Council received from Bonneville a set of two Columbia Basin Fish Accords proposals. Included in this set was a proposal from the Yakama Nation (YN) for #2009-001-00, *Expanded Multi-Species Acclimation in the Wenatchee/Methow Basins*.

The proposal was submitted to the ISRP for review, and on April 1, 2009 the ISRP provided a review (ISRP document 2009-10). The ISRP found that the proposal "Meets Scientific Review Criteria (Qualified)".

The *Expanded Multi-Species Acclimation in the Wenatchee/Methow Basins*, Project #2009-001-00 submitted by the YN is a compilation of the following six accord proposal from the May 2008 agreement.²

- Proposal #2008-453-00, *Methow Steelhead-Winthrop*,
- Proposal #2008-460-00, *Methow Steelhead Acclimation*,
- Proposal #2008-461-00, *S. Chinook-Chiwawa R/Nason Cr*
- Proposal #2008-462-00, *S. Chinook-Little Wenatchee*
- Proposal #2008-463-00, *S. Chinook-Peshastin*
- Proposal #2008-464-00, *Steelhead-Wntch, Chmstk, Mission*

The proposals were inter-dependant upon each other, and were therefore combined by agreement of the sponsor and Bonneville for the review submittal.

The objectives of this project are to develop an expanded acclimation program for existing spring Chinook and steelhead hatchery mitigation programs in the Wenatchee and Methow basins. Through the implementation of these objectives, small acclimation/release sites will be scattered throughout appropriate spawning habitat ("targeted acclimation") in an effort to disperse returning adults to appropriate locations and produce higher smolt to adult survival rates than direct scatter-type or large single-point releases. The goal of the project is to help achieve the recovery goals for the two listed stocks.

ANALYSIS

The ISRP found the project narrative adequate to understand the intent of the project, but qualified their recommendation with the understanding that the project's objective associated with the development of a plan (i.e., Objective 1) that would detail the biological and physical data for the acclimation sites, and would be reviewed prior to the implementation of the project. As part of this recommendation the ISRP requested that the following items be address as part of the plan.

² The proposal is listed in the May 2008 agreement in Attachment B; Hatchery Planning, O&M. New, and Hatchery Capital.

- fully document the current status of the resource (spring Chinook and summer steelhead) in the two subbasins;
- establish clear improvements to the VSP parameters for these focal species as a consequence of using long-term acclimation ponds;
- craft a monitoring design to evaluate any success (especially since the sponsor acknowledges not much is known about whether this strategy will improve the status of the species); and
- integrate the principles from the Council's 2009 program, the HSRG findings, the Upper Columbia River Chinook and Steelhead recovery plan, the 2008 BiOp, and impending hatchery biological opinions.

The ISRP stated that the project is interesting and potentially important, but there is a need for additional detail so that the review qualification can be addressed. The ISRP states that the detail, outlined above, could be addressed as part of the planning objective associated with this project.

The Yakama Nation is concerned about the detail and type of information requested by the ISRP especially given the relatively small scope of the project that is addressing only the development of an appropriate acclimation strategy of existing hatchery production levels in the Wenatchee and Methow basins. In addition, this recovery production is evaluated through well-established, reviewed and intensive monitoring programs.³

Based on the ISRP review the Council staff recommends that the Council supports this project with the understanding that implementation of the action be dependant on the outcome of the proposed planning effort and future review by the ISRP and Council.

³ Mid-Columbia Coho Restoration Project #1996-040-00, Integrated Status and Effectiveness Monitoring Program (ISEMP) #2003-017-00, and HCP's Conceptual Approach to Monitoring and Evaluating the Chelan and Douglas County Hatchery Programs.

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