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August 4, 2015

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Tony Grover, Lynn Palensky, and Patty O'Toole

SUBJECT: c) Summary of recommendations to implement emerging program priorities

PROPOSED ACTION: Staff seek guidance from the Committee on preferred alternatives to solicit for proposals to implement emerging program priorities, after discussion of alternatives. A summary of staff recommendations to do this follow.

SIGNIFICANCE Direction from Council members will help staff further develop the most appropriate process to implement selected work in the priority areas of the fish and wildlife program.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Any process resulting from this discussion and anticipated decisions would not necessarily require an increase in program funds. If staff are directed to further develop a request for proposals or a solicitation process to begin in early FY 2016, the effort would increase staffing level in this area, increase sponsors' attention to, and possible level of participation in, the process.

BACKGROUND

The 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program states the following: (also see http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/program/2014-12/program/partsix_implementation/ii_investment_strategy/)

The program represents a substantial investment by the ratepayers of the Northwest and the nation's citizens. For example, over the last three decades Bonneville and the other program implementers have made substantial investments in a wide variety of physical structures and land acquisitions to benefit fish and wildlife. There is a growing need throughout the Columbia River Basin to protect or upgrade these investments as facilities age or become obsolete, structural standards change, and extreme-event damages accumulate.

The Council recognizes that ratepayer funding requires some basic controls and that there is not unlimited funding to address every need for fish and wildlife affected by the development of the federal hydrosystem, all at once. At the same time, the Council received recommendations to continue the ongoing work under the program along with recommendations for new or expanded work. Bonneville's existing budget commitments limit its flexibility for funding new work, constrain expansion of ongoing work, may leave unfunded some of the state and federal fish and wildlife agencies' and tribes' priorities, and provide for only limited capacity for maintenance of past investments.

Through a series of principles and by identifying emerging priorities the Council seeks to guide Bonneville's funding and implementation of the fish and wildlife program in a manner that maximizes benefits to fish and wildlife.

ANALYSIS

The Council identified seven emerging program priority areas to implement recommended measures that expand existing work or expands the program in new directions. See the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program Investment Strategy at page 116:

During the course of the next five years, the Council anticipates that Bonneville will take the necessary steps to integrate these priorities into the program and will report annually to the Council on its progress. The Council may adjust the following ordered program priorities:

1. Provide for funding *long-term maintenance* (Appendix P) of the assets that have been created by prior program investments
2. Implement *adaptive management* (including prioritized research on critical uncertainties) throughout the program by assessing the effectiveness of ongoing projects, developing program objectives when appropriate and taking into account the effects of *climate change*
3. Preserve program effectiveness by supporting: (1) expanded management of *predators*; (2) mapping and determining hotspots for *toxic contaminants*; and (3) aggressively addressing *non-native and invasive species*
4. Investigate *blocked area mitigation* options through reintroduction, passage and habitat improvement, and implement if warranted
5. Implement additional *sturgeon* and *lamprey* measures (passage and research)
6. Update the *subbasin plans* most in need of updates
7. Continue efforts to *improve floodplain habitats*

The Council, working with fish and wildlife managers, the ISRP, Bonneville and others, can expedite the implementation of emerging priorities by conducting targeted RFPs

and solicitations that will result in reviewable project proposals. The Council anticipates recommending some or all of this work to Bonneville for funding and implementation.

Alternatives:

A. Council Solicitations and targeted Request for Proposals

This option is a Council led series of requests for proposals and solicitations to identify specific proposals to implement identified measures immediately in FY 2016, in the near term during FY 2017 and over an extended time period of one to 3 years.

B. Council defers to Bonneville to implement emerging priorities

This option defers to Bonneville to implement the program's emerging priorities over the next three years. Bonneville will report annually to the Council on progress implementing the emerging priorities.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends Alternative A, to be implemented in the following manner:

- 1) Staff recommends the following tasks be considered for FY 2016 (EP means Emerging Priority):
 - a) EP 1 - Initiate hatchery condition assessments.
 - b) EP 3 - Work with the Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Work Group to scope the toxics mapping and hotspot determination project.
 - c) EP 3 – Consider assistance for states' efforts to prevent the establishment of quagga and zebra mussels.
 - d) EP 4 - Solicit for proposals addressing Phase 1: a habitat assessment, an evaluation of information from passage studies at other blockages and from previous assessments of passage at Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams.
- 2) Staff recommends the following work on emerging priority areas as appropriate for commencing in FY 2017:
 - a) EP 1 – Complete hatchery condition assessments.
 - b) EP 1 – Possible initiation of work related to fish screens.
 - c) EP 2 – Initiate temperature analysis and modeling in the Grand Coulee to McNary reach of the Columbia river.
 - d) EP 3 – Convene a technical workgroup to determine predator management effectiveness and develop a common metric for predation.
 - e) EP 3 - Consider ongoing or additional assistance for states' efforts to prevent the establishment of quagga and zebra mussels.
 - f) EP 3 – Expand pikeminnow removal to other mainstem dams.
 - g) EP 3 – Initiate toxics mapping and hotspot determination project.

- h) EP 4 – Continue with addressing Phase 1: a habitat assessment, an evaluation of information from passage studies at other blockages and from previous assessments of passage at Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams.
 - i) EP 6 - Council hold discussions or a workshop with entities in the region to discuss timing and scope of a subbasin plan update.
 - j) EP 7 - Council hold a science-policy forum to discuss floodplain reconnection with interested entities in the region.
- 3) For work to be done in FY 2016: Staff recommends the Council focus on one or two specific tasks as identified in 1), above, and invite logical organizations¹ to submit proposals to implement the work. Staff will seek Committee approval of the specifics at the September 2015 Committee meeting and the full Council in October. The focused process will commence in October.
- 4) For work to be done in FY 2017: Staff recommends operating under the targeted solicitation model, with variations depending on funding available and the level of specificity of defined work, as described in 2), above. Staff will seek Committee approval of the specifics at the September 2015 Committee meeting and the full Council in October. The targeted solicitation process will commence in October or November.
- 5) Staff recommends staff work begin on an open solicitation after the processes described in 3) and 4), above, have been launched. Staff will seek Committee approval of the specifics at the December 2015 Committee meeting and the full Council in January 2016. The open solicitation process will commence in Spring 2016 and may include these topics:
- a) EP 1 – Complete work related to fish screens.
 - b) EP 1 – Assess unmet O&M needs of wildlife lands and proceed to work on those unmet needs.
 - c) EP 2 – Initiate work on new or ongoing priorities identified in the updated Research Plan.
 - d) EP 2 – Continue temperature analysis and modeling in the Grand Coulee to McNary reach of the Columbia river.
 - e) EP 3 – Solicit a research proposal to address regional concerns about the lack of fully understanding the magnitude of pinniped predation on adult salmon from the mouth of the Columbia river to Bonneville Dam.
 - f) EP 3 - If necessary complete addition toxics monitoring in areas where necessary to fully address this Program measure.
 - g) EP 3 – Seek regional partners to assist in toxics identification and remediation work.
 - h) EP 3 - Consider ongoing or additional assistance for states' efforts to prevent the establishment of quagga and zebra mussels.
 - i) EP 3 – Implement non-native species control actions where they are known to adversely impact native species.

¹ Open to non-Accord parties.

- j) EP 4 – Consider proceeding to Phase 2 of reintroduction efforts based on the outcome of Phase 1.
 - k) EP 5 - Solicit for sturgeon proposals that could be implemented in the 1-3 year timeframe.
 - l) EP 5 - Once the synthesis report is available, solicit for lamprey proposals per the measures in the Program.
 - m) EP 6 - Update subbasin plans most in need of updates.
 - n) EP 7 – Implement new floodplain reconnection actions.
- 6) Bonneville to present its' first annual report to the Council on how the emerging priorities are being implemented at the March 2016 Council meeting.