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September 9, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council decision on Project #2009-012-00, *Willamette Bi-Op Habitat Restoration*, a BiOp project.

PROPOSED ACTION: The Council staff recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee recommend to the Council implementation of this project for Fiscal Year 2011. This recommendation requires that OWEB provide a final M&E plan for ISRP review prior to the 2012 field season.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Currently the project start-of-year budget reflects \$2,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2010 and 2011.

BACKGROUND

On May 28, 2010, Bonneville and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) submitted a project intended to address specific Reasonable and Prudent Action (RPA) habitat needs identified in the 2008 Willamette Project Biological Opinions (i.e., NMFS 2008¹, and USFWS 2008²) for Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) review. This is a new start and is intended to be a comprehensive approach to prioritizing and funding efforts to restore native fish and wildlife habitat in the Willamette River and its floodplain below the major federal hydro projects.

¹ NMFS 2008. Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(2) Consultation Biological Opinion & Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation on the "Willamette River Basin Flood Control Project."

² USFWS 2008. Biological Opinion On the Continued Operation and Maintenance of the Willamette River Basin Project and Effects to Oregon Chub, Bull Trout, and Bull Trout Critical Habitat Designated Under the Endangered Species Act. As Proposed by: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Department of Army) Bonneville Power Administration (Department of Energy) and Bureau of Reclamation (Department of Interior).

On June 23, 2010, the ISRP requested additional information from the proponents in order to determine whether the proposal met scientific criteria (ISRP document 2010-22). No public comment was received on the ISRP review.

The ISRP requested additional detail on the following:

- a more complete description of how existing habitat projects have been implemented and how successful they have been in the mainstem Willamette River, including biological responses, if known,
- details about the objectives, work elements, methods, and metrics (in particular, more detail about the specific criteria that will be used to prioritize projects), and
- some site-specific details about the BiOp RM&E plan.

On July 21, 2010 the Council received a response from OWEB and on August 25, 2010 the Council received the ISRP's final review (ISRP document 2010-29). The ISRP found that the proposal met scientific review criteria ("qualified").

ANALYSIS

The ISRP appreciated the information received from the proponent addressing the items outlined above. Though, as part of their final review, the ISRP provided a meets science review criteria ranking it was qualified based on additional needs for the M&E plan. The ISRP requested greater detail, including procedures for implementation, status and trend, and effectiveness monitoring at appropriate spatial scales, and how this project will inform adaptive management. The ISRP provided specific needs (e.g., metrics and methods) and also mentioned the importance of the need to coordinate closely with toxics researchers as it relates to the defined water quality monitoring efforts. The ISRP stated that this final M&E plan should be complete in the first year for review.

In addition, the ISRP would like to see progress reports and that there is close coordination with other BiOp restoration activities that overlap spatially (i.e., Columbia River Estuary - CREST, project #2010-004-00). It is important to note that this proposal will be included in the anticipated geographical categorical review (Habitat) that will provide the region an opportunity for the proponent to provide an update on the project's progress and relation to other restoration efforts.

Based on the ISRP review, the Council staff recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee support implementation of this project in Fiscal Year 2011. This recommendation requires that OWEB provide a final M&E plan for review prior to the 2012 field season.