

Bruce A. Measure
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Montana

Rhonda Whiting
Montana

W. Bill Booth
Idaho

James A. Yost
Idaho



Dick Wallace
Vice-Chair
Washington

Tom Karier
Washington

Melinda S. Eden
Oregon

Joan M. Dukes
Oregon

September 9, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council decision on Project #2010-001-00, Upper Columbia Programmatic Habitat, a BiOp project.

PROPOSED ACTION: Based on the ISRP review, the Council staff recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee recommend to the Council implementation of this project. This recommendation requires reviews in 2013 and 2016 to address the items raised by the ISRP in their most recent review.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The current contract request for Fiscal Year 2011 is \$195,000 for project administration. Additional Fiscal Year 2011 contracts will include approximately \$3.5 million for on-the-ground projects/actions, which are being selected now.

BACKGROUND

On March 2, 2010, the Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) submitted a 2008 Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion (BiOp) project narrative for review by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP). This new project replaces 14 Biological Opinion (BiOp) non-Accord habitat projects from the Fiscal Year 2007-09 solicitation cycle that represented approximately \$3.5 million in annual funding. This proposal outlines a programmatic process for funding projects that implement habitat improvement and protection actions in the Upper Columbia¹ region (UC) consistent with, and in support of, the Upper Columbia River Salmon Recovery Plan². The Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board

¹ The UC is located in north-central Washington, primarily within the Columbia Cascade Province in the Columbia River Basin. The UC is composed of the mainstem Columbia River from Chief Joseph Dam downstream to the confluence with Crab Creek (just downstream of Wanapum Dam). The UC includes the Crab Creek, Wenatchee, Entiat, Lake Chelan, Methow, and Okanogan subbasins.

² The Recovery Plan was adopted by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration on October 9, 2007. The Recovery Plan is also aligned with Douglas County PUD and Chelan County PUD Anadromous Fish Agreement and Habitat Conservation Plans for Rocky Reach, Rock Island and Wells hydroelectric projects.

(UCSRB) is the project's proponent. The primary goal is to benefit ESA-listed UC spring Chinook and steelhead populations. To accomplish this goal, this proposal establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure strategic allocation of funds to priority recovery efforts throughout the subbasins of the UC. The proposed programmatic approach to identifying/selecting projects for funding will allow us to take advantage of effective ongoing efforts in the UC, from project development to technical review of final designs, to ensure implementation of high priority actions that address primary limiting factors associated with habitat degradation in the subbasins. In addition, the proposal also includes post-implementation elements that utilize monitoring programs that are currently in place or will be implemented in FY11.

On May 4, 2010, the ISRP requested additional information from the proponents in order to determine whether the proposal met scientific criteria (ISRP document 2010-12). No public comment was received on the ISRP review.

The ISRP requested additional detail on the following:

- a concise and brief description of how existing habitat projects have been implemented and how well they are working in the subbasins of interest,
- details about the objectives, work elements, methods, and metrics, and
- a completed BiOp RM&E plan.

On July 6, 2010, the Council received a response from Bonneville and on August 25, 2010, the Council received the ISRP's final review (ISRP document 2010-28). The ISRP found that the proposal met scientific review criteria ("qualified").

ANALYSIS

The ISRP found the proponents provided the necessary details and provided the assurance to the review panel for this new approach to habitat implementation in the UC to meet science review criteria. Their final review was organized to address the scientific issues raised in their initial review (see above). The qualification raised by the ISRP speaks to the opportunity afforded by this approach to consolidate habitat restoration actions under an overarching project that offers administrative efficiency and a landscape-based strategy could benefit the region. Based on this understanding, the ISRP sees value of having sequence reviews in years 3 and 6 of the project in order to verify that assumptions about administrative streamlining, project selection efficiency and action effectiveness are proceeding as anticipated. These reviews will align with the UC Regional Technical Team (UCRTT) Analysis Workshops currently scheduled for the fall/winter of 2012/13 and 2015/16. The UCRTT Analysis Workshops review, evaluate, and synthesize results from monitoring in the UC pertinent to the Upper Columbia Spring Chinook and Steelhead Recovery Plan. The proponents also suggest that aligning the reviews to the UCRTT Analysis Workshops will provide a good opportunity for the ISRP to review reports and participate with the regional stakeholders and discuss the benefits of this approach for the Columbia River Basin. In addition, this proposal will be included in the anticipated geographical categorical review (Habitat) including an opportunity for the proponent to provide an update on the project's progress and site visits for the review panel.

Based on the ISRP review, the Council staff recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee recommend to the Council implementation of this project³. This recommendation requires reviews in 2013 and 2016 address the items raised by the ISRP in their most recent review.

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³ Through this review, the ISRP, though cautious due to the large size, is supportive of the RM&E associated with this proposal and is appreciative of the work that UCSRB has put into coordinating the existing monitoring programs. It is important to note that this support also addresses a condition placed on Project #2009-003-00, *Columbia Cascade Province MOA Habitat Projects* as part of the Council recommendation on February 10, 2010 (i.e., that that necessary monitoring elements be contracted for based on favorable ISRP review of the M&E plan that will be proposed for Project 2010-001-00, *Upper Columbia Programmatic Habitat Project*).