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MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee

FROM: Patty O'Toole, Program Implementation Manager
Laura Robinson, Fish and Wildlife Division Intern

SUBJECT: Update on Multi-year action plans, Subbasin Plan Updates

At the February Fish and Wildlife Committee meeting staff will provide an update on the multi-year action plans.

The 2009 Fish and Wildlife Program (Program) calls for the development of multi-year action plans as follows:

[T]he Council will work with recommending entities, Bonneville and others to shape the measures recommended for all areas of the Program into multi-year action plans similar to those implementation plans in the 2008 Biological Opinion and the Accords. The Council will then work with Bonneville and relevant entities to estimate multi-year implementation budgets and secure funding commitments that ensure adequate funding for these action plans.

The objective of this effort is to develop long-term (10 year) plans for each subbasin that include actions recommended to the Council during the 2009 Program amendment process. The Program provides guidance as to what the action plans should include: ongoing and new proposed actions, expected benefits, sequence of work, priority of work, monitoring and evaluation as appropriate and estimated budget.

The action plans will provide for long-term Program planning in describing a road map for work to be implemented in subbasins and in developing fiscal estimates for what funding would be necessary to complete that work. In general, action plans represent the best current estimate of future work that should and could be done within a subbasin. Action plans can provide transparency in long term planning and assist in keeping expectations for program investment consistent with available funds.

Challenges

Information on expected benefits is not readily available for most of the actions recommended to the Council during the recent Program amendment process. While FCRPS BiOp actions and some recovery plan actions estimate benefits for listed species, most of the recommended actions did not come to the Council with quantified estimates of benefits. Until benefit estimates can be developed more comprehensively for all the recommended actions, subbasin plan information should be used to link the recommended actions with limiting factors. This linkage will describe which actions can address known problems in the subbasins.

As the subbasin plans currently exist in the Program, limiting factors are described in many different ways. Recently the Status of the Resource (CBFWA) on-line information was updated with limiting factors for aquatic focal species for each subbasin. The CBFWA staff also cross-walked subbasin plan and recovery plan limiting factors to a set of standardized, habitat based limiting factors. This work seems reasonably consistent with subbasin plans and provides a consistent base to work from. As we work through each subbasin, we will review and revise the information if necessary to ensure it is comprehensive and accurate. Also, the Program recommendations came in all shapes and sizes. Frequently, detailed information about the actions being recommended was not included in the recommendations. This is not surprising given that little guidance was provided regarding subbasin-level actions at the outset of the amendment process. Wherever possible, staff is using other information sources such as subbasin plans, Taurus, Pisces and project proposal information to address information gaps in the development of the multi-year action plans.

Action plans are not intended to be detailed project designs; they contain relatively high level information about *possible* subbasin actions intended to benefit fish and wildlife over a ten year period. Action plans will evolve and change during this time due to scientific and policy changes. The degree of information in the action plans provides the Council with significant flexibility to adaptively manage the Program in the future.

Wildlife actions

Although subbasin plans contain limiting factor information for wildlife, the Council's fish and wildlife program does not include linkages between specific wildlife actions and subbasin limiting factors. Implementation of wildlife mitigation actions is currently tied to the wildlife loss assessments and the remaining habitat units to be acquired. It may be important to the Council to consider how wildlife mitigation actions are linked to limiting factors in the future. In the interim, wildlife mitigation actions will be described in the actions plans, but linked to loss assessments, not limiting factors.

RM&E actions

The link between RM&E actions recommended to the Council and limiting factors are not explicitly made in the action plans, because most RM&E actions do not directly address limiting factors but instead measure the status of a population, the effectiveness of particular actions or measure progress of individual projects or groups of projects towards Program objectives. Separately, RM&E actions recommended to the Council will be linked to strategies within the RM&E framework (currently under development).

Development of Action Plans

Staff is working now to populate a database with actions, limiting factor information (in lieu of expected benefits), budget estimates and other information. Because of the dynamic, real-time nature of the on-line database, reports of this information can be as detailed or as concise as needed. Some examples of reports are available for your review. To view examples, go to <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/lf/Factors.asp?Report=Factors&SubbasinID=58>. In the upper right corner of the page, you can select from three different reports for the example subbasin: a subbasin overview, an assessment of how limiting factors and recommended actions are linked and a list of actions with long term budget estimates. At the Fish and Wildlife committee meeting staff will review these on-line reports. These reports will eventually comprise the action plans.

Obtaining feedback from the region and prioritization

All this information is based on what actions were recommended during the amendment process. We realize that some of this information may be outdated, or incorrectly described in the reports. A key feature of the development of these plans is to work with the recommending entities, Bonneville and others to obtain the most current information. The intent is for staff to complete the initial legwork for this effort, and then seek public comment from others in the region. Staff intends to provide the draft plans for local review when the subbasin management plan update process is initiated - for review, revision, and to the extent possible, prioritization of actions. As part of the update process, subbasin planners will then have the option to include the revised action plans as implementation plans for their subbasin plan.

Subbasin management plan updates

As described in the Program, the subbasin management plan update process will be voluntary, with no planning funds available. The subbasin planers would have one year from the date of Council's request to submit any updates. Staff will prepare a timeline for this effort after further discussion with Council members.