



Independent Scientific Review Panel

for the Northwest Power and Conservation Council

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Extracted from:

ISRP Final Review of Proposals for the Resident Fish, Data Management, and Regional Coordination Category

Final Review of Proposals
April 3, 2012

ISRP Document 2012-06; *Section VI (B), Page 270.*

Comments on Draft Wildlife Monitoring Implementation Strategy (WMIS)

The document is a good step forward. It provides a basinwide context for RME and reporting to help communicate the strategy for implementing the Fish and Wildlife Program and provides context for ISRP review of the Program and its projects. The ISRP provides comments on strengths and weaknesses of the draft WMIS as constructive comments for consideration to improve the process.

The ISRP found the definition and description of the three types of monitoring to be useful for providing context for the discussion. Identification of both specific wildlife objectives that require tracking habitat units (HUs) and standard classification systems for habitat types is a beneficial step. In addition, the ISRP concludes that the list of implementation strategies includes the essential elements and the concepts the wildlife managers considered in developing WMIS are valid and important. Appendix A provides valuable contextual information. Appendix B would be more useful if, in addition to the list of Focal Habitats obtained from the subbasin plans, it also contained an additional column that listed several Focal Wildlife Species of special concern in each, i.e., what species or groups of wildlife species

is management in the various focal habitats aimed specifically towards? This species list may also provide guidance toward specific management activities needed in each focal habitat based on species requirements.

In terms of the process, the fact that the Forum had some major areas of agreement indicates that a framework exists to resolve disputes. The fact that the Forum dedicated much effort and was unable to resolve all issues could jeopardize this portion of the Program. A structured decision management framework could help in solidifying these areas of agreement and resolving difficult issues that are still a problem. The discussion of the reporting framework stated that designated projects for each HLI category may be necessary to implement the reporting mechanism. If adequate funding is provided, this framework is a strength. However, if funding is not adequate, this framework is a weakness. Using a central repository to identify protocols is a good strategy as is having a dedicated project acquire data for management, sharing, and reporting.

The ISRP is concerned that Ecosystem Health is not included as an HLI and recommends this indicator be developed and included as soon as possible. Another ISRP concern is the WMIS emphasis on measuring abundance of habitat with an inventory of the entire basin rather than focusing on repeated measures over time to measure trends. The document should focus more on repeatable and economical sampling of the resources, and then on statistical estimation of the abundance of habitat.

The ISRP understands that the Council is responsible for implementation of strategies while co-managers require strategies to support their own decision processes. This situation could potentially create inconsistent strategies, especially because the Council does not expect any of the regional partners to formally adopt the implementation strategies. This is a particularly fruitful area for regional coordination. A related question is not clear, have the metrics, Habitat Units as measured by the Habitat Evaluation Procedures(HEP) process or the Combined Habitat Assessment Protocol (CHAP) method been accepted by all entities in the region? Another potential weakness is that sample designs for obtaining focal species information may vary and yield inconsistent information, if there is no strong pressure to standardize.

It is not clear why the WMIS emphasized the following projects: Upper Columbia Monitoring and Evaluation Project, Ecological Integrity Assessments, Monitoring and Evaluation of Wildlife Areas in Washington; the Kootenai River Floodplain Ecosystem Operational Loss Assessment, Protection, Mitigation, and Rehabilitation Project; and the Habitat and Biodiversity Information System for Columbia River Basin project. More explanation of why these projects are featured would be useful. The level of specificity in the conceptual work plan (Appendix C) may be a weakness if taken to mean that the project sponsors have already been, in effect, identified.

The ISRP has a few suggestions for organizational changes to the document. The description of the distinction between HLIs and FWIs should be presented earlier in the document. Figure 1 provides little value as presented. The figure should be deleted or more information provided to add value. A table should accompany Figure 3 to present differences in habitat changes between the two scenes. These differences could be framed to be valuable to readers if the

table provided High-level Indicators. This might be a good figure to also address the scale ideas in Figure 1. Table 1 (p. 27) is useful, so incorporating the most important pieces of Table 1 (p. 15) into Table 1 (p. 27) text is suggested. The Implementation Strategy section could be improved with an introductory paragraph written to identify which major actions, such as Mapping of Landscapes and Ledgers, will follow in this section.

Too much material is repeated in the report. Suggestions for combining sections and deleting others as organizational revisions are: Move/incorporate “Types of Monitoring” (p 8) into current “Completion of Wildlife Monitoring Implementation Strategy”; Incorporate part of “Considerations for Wildlife” (p 13) into “Completion of Wildlife Monitoring Implementation Strategy”; Incorporate Figure 1 section (p 17) into discussion of “mapping” in “Framework: Basinwide strategies”; Move examples, given on page 10, for project effectiveness and action effectiveness monitoring, to later sections. More information should be provided about the methods and analysis being used and evaluated by the projects used as examples on page 11.

Some gaps in content to consider:

- Include acknowledgement that mapping activities may utilize models and these models must be scientifically evaluated rather than automatically accepted as valid.
- For continued development of WMIS, the document must very clearly identify who will do the compilation and reporting and that individual projects must make the data available.
- A description of how information on invasive weeds will fit into the programs described in this document is needed.
- Examples relating maps to HLI's and implementation strategies at the basin scale would be useful.
- The species in the Council's Program concerning Wildlife Mitigation Priorities, Construction and Inundation Loss Assessments should be listed in the WMIS document.
- A list of acronyms and their meaning should be provided as an appendix. The authors should be diligent in defining acronyms the first time they appear.
- A weakness of the document is that the need for so many additional projects is stated it is difficult to keep them straight. A summary identifying and briefly describing the new projects would help, as well as how each project meets Strategy goals.
- It is unclear what constitutes an effective project from a statistical perspective. That is, what are the targets, plus/minus 10%, 25%, or 50% of reference sites? If targets have not been determined, what are thoughts about how to determine targets at this point in the evolution of these plans?
- If a project is effective, there ought to be discussion for actions required for maintaining this effectiveness. What are the plans for making these decisions?