

Rhonda Whiting
Chair
Montana

Bruce A. Measure
Montana

James A. Yost
Idaho

W. Bill Booth
Idaho



Bill Bradbury
Vice-Chair
Oregon

Henry Lorenzen
Oregon

Tom Karier
Washington

Phil Rockefeller
Washington

November 8, 2012

Mr. William C. Maslen
Manager, Fish and Wildlife Division
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208

Dear Mr. Maslen:

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the Council's decision on a set of data management and sharing projects and processes. This decision and resulting recommendation to BPA was made by the Council at its meeting on November 6, 2012.

In addition, a purpose of this letter is to inform the project sponsors and other interested parties of the status of this Council action. The following is a summary of the action taken by the Council at the meeting in August.

COUNCIL DECISION AND RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Based on the ISRP review, the Council supports the recommendations of the Program Evaluation and Reporting Committee, as described by staff and recommended to the Council by the Fish and Wildlife Committee, in the following manner: continued implementation and funding for StreamNet (1988-108-04) and the Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (2004-002), both with a budget reduction within the range of 10 to 15% and with other conditions as detailed by staff;
- 2) continued support for the work of the Fish Screening Oversight Committee as detailed by staff;
- 3) continued support for the Habitat Evaluation Procedures project (2006-006) pending the work of the Wildlife Crediting Forum and then the Council on a recommendation for future plans for the use of HEP, with the Forum to report to the Council no later than January 2013;
- 4) discontinued funding for the Northwest Habitat Institute project (2003-072) with a three-month phase out and the transfer of data to StreamNet; and
- 5) discontinued support for the Status of the Resources Report by the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority, while a steering committee led by Council and Bonneville staff develops a proposed scope of work for technical services to cover any resulting data and reporting gaps.

Please see the attached background document for additional details concerning this Council recommendation to the Bonneville Power Administration.

Sincerely,

T. Grover/Signed -11/8/2012

Tony Grover
Director, Fish and Wildlife Division

cc: Marcy Foster, BPA
Peter Lofy, BPA
Paul Krueger, BPA
Byran Mercier, BPA
Greg Dondlinger, BPA
Rosemary Mazaika, BPA
Tom O'Neill, NHI
Randy Fisher, PSMFC
Bruce Schmidt, StreamNet
Tom Iverson, CBFWF
Jen Beyer, PNAMP
Paul Ashley, RHT

Background

In the Council's July 2012 decision for Data Management projects, the Council recommended that the Council engage in a regional data management and sharing discussion through a Program Evaluation & Reporting Committee (PERC). The PERC would provide guidance related to Council oversight and management of data management needs and activities, and associated challenges and opportunities. This guidance would be directed towards existing and evolving regional level data-management projects and data-sharing processes. This effort was to be a three month focused endeavor which would result in implementation recommendations on a subset of data management-related projects at the October and November Council meetings.

The PERC met twice with regional partners. The first meeting was August 22nd in Spokane and the second was September 13th in Portland. Based on those discussions and presentations, recommendations were developed for PNAMP, NW Habitat Institute (NHI), the related project work of the HEP Team, Status of the Resource Report (through CBFWF) and StreamNet. The PERC recommendations were shared with the Fish and Wildlife Committee members and the public on October 3rd, 2012 in special committee meeting teleconference. The PERC recommendations were presented to the Fish and Wildlife Committee on October 9th, 2012 at a regular Committee meeting in Whitefish, Montana. After some discussion and minor amendments to the PERC recommendations, the Committee voted unanimously to support the PERC recommendations. On October 10th, 2012, staff gave a detailed presentation on the Fish and Wildlife Committee's PERC recommendations to the full Council. An opportunity for public comment was available at each of the meetings on the 3rd, 9th and 10th of October, 2012. Following are the Committee's decision recommendations to the full Council based on the PERC recommendations.

This set of recommendations amends and clarifies some of the July 2012 recommendations (Appendix) regarding data management and some other projects. Aside from the specific follow-up recommendations for this subset of projects, all other recommendations, expectations and assumptions of the July 2012 recommendations still apply. See <http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2013/Default.asp>

As with our recent category review recommendations, staff does not recommend specific budgets, but rather the work or work products. You will see reference to budget reductions and percentages and those apply only in the near term. The following recommendations for implementation assume a three-year implementation timeframe.

PERC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations cover six projects, processes or activities that were reviewed in detail by the Council's Program Evaluation and Recommendation Committee. For each of the six there are from one to three numbered recommendations designed to better implement existing work, or to phase out low priority work.

Northwest Habitat Institute (NHI) 2003-072-00

This project was an outgrowth of the spotted owl management issues that occurred in the early to mid-1990s. The collection of data sets that this project uses are called Interactive Biodiversity

Information System (IBIS). NHI was involved in subbasin planning; specifically in storing and making available the upland environmental data for subbasin planners in GIS format. NHI was involved in conducting CHAP for the Willamette.

Recommendations:

1. Carry contract forward for three months into FY2013 at a \$25,000 level. Council recommends no further funding for NHI.
2. BPA to work with NHI to store unique data at StreamNet.

Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP) 2006-006-00

BPA entered into Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) with state, federal, and tribal wildlife management entities, with jurisdiction throughout the Columbia Basin Region, to protect and/or enhance habitat as mitigation/compensation for losses due to the construction of hydro facilities and subsequent inundation when the dams were put into operation. Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP) are used to evaluate and document habitat losses and habitat gains. Habitat units (HUs), the output of HEP analysis, are the form of currency used to document both the losses from hydro projects (dams) and the gains from habitat protection/enhancement measures (mitigation projects). BPA applies the HUs it earns against the HUs lost as reflected in habitat loss assessments wildlife managers developed to estimate and document the impact of the construction of FCRPS dams throughout the Columbia Basin Region.

The Regional HEP Team (RHT) is an unbiased evaluation team that conducts HEP evaluations. The RHT provides consistent application of HEP models and unbiased survey results (HU credits). In addition, RHT staff identifies and rectifies (when possible) inconsistencies in past HEP evaluation results. The contract to manage the HEP team is currently managed by CBFWA. The HEP team, led by Paul Ashley has been conducting HEP surveys around the basin since 2000. HEP surveys were conducted prior to 2000, but were not conducted under a standardized methodology. The data for the HEP surveys resides with the individual managers and on disks with Paul Ashley. According to the wildlife managers, the vegetation data collected in the surveys are important to preserve and to preserve it in one central repository. Paul retires in less than two years and he has trained others on the team to conduct surveys into the future, however, a succession plan is needed.

Following the October Council meeting two meetings of the WCF were held on October 11 and October 22. Invitees included regional fish and wildlife managers, Bonneville and customer group representatives. The focus of these meetings was to articulate the managers' needs for access and use of data and information from NHI. As a result, the managers have developed a draft document addressing these issues. The draft is currently being circulated by the state and tribal fish and wildlife managers for policy level review and we expect to have available for Council review by early next week.

Recommendations:

1. Reconvene the Wildlife Crediting Forum (WCF) to address needs and future plans for HEP; specifically to make recommendations to the Council on:

- As a first priority, the need to access information such as GIS maps or tools from NHI in the future.
 - The need, if any, for future HEP surveys
 - Describe the need for HEP surveys to support active management decision making
 - frequency and duration of that work
 - recommended succession plan as the current HEP team leader transitions to retirement
 - The need to archive the existing vegetation transect data into a central repository.
2. The WCF should convene as needed to develop recommendations and suggested outcomes for review by the Fish & Wildlife Committee by January 1st 2013, or sooner, on needs identified above.

StreamNet 1988-108-04

StreamNet is a cooperative, multi-agency data compilation and data management project authorized by the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program (FWP). It is funded primarily by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) through the FWP as part of its program to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife resources affected by the development and operation of hydroelectric facilities on the Columbia River and tributaries. Other funding has also been obtained in the past from agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) administers the project. PSMFC staff are also responsible for the regional components of the project, including maintaining the regional database, assuring regional data standardization, making data available in Geographic Information System (GIS) formats, building and operating Internet based data delivery systems, and posting the data for public access.

Three fourths of the project consists of sub-projects within the state fish and wildlife agencies, Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission and US Fish and Wildlife Service to develop data and databases within the respective agencies and facilitate data transfer in regionally consistent format. In addition to administratively housing the StreamNet sub-projects, these cooperating agencies also contribute in kind support. The kind and amount of support varies between agencies. All agencies provide at least some salary support for their respective StreamNet Project Leader (from one or two months to full time). Several agencies contribute use of servers or other computer equipment and services that are not covered by charges for indirect costs. All contribute time by biologists and in some cases data entry staff to provide data to the project.

StreamNet's functions are to obtain, standardize, georeference and disseminate fish related data. It focuses on the kinds of data primarily collected by the state, tribal and federal fisheries management agencies for use in management and research programs. StreamNet is guided by a steering committee made up of data stewards in the four states and a rep from the USFWS; there is little regional policy-level guidance.

Recommendations:

1. Budget reduction within the range of 10 to 15%, which is commensurate with the reduction being sought from project managers throughout the Columbia River Basin.
2. Provide an ongoing forum consisting of Council, BPA representatives and fish and wildlife managers to direct data management including an annual policy guidance meeting with the Council's Fish and Wildlife Committee.
3. Those collecting data should use BPA funds only to collect Columbia River Basin data and should prioritize entering that data into StreamNet.

Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP) 2004-002-00

Federal, state, tribal, local, and private aquatic monitoring programs in the Pacific Northwest have evolved independently in response to different organizational mandates, jurisdictional needs, issues and questions. Planning and coordination of federal, state and tribal monitoring activities have evolved slowly but steadily over the past ten years. In 2004, the Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP) emerged from an ad hoc effort to become a formal institution charged with providing a forum for coordination of aquatic monitoring efforts in the region. The geographic area of this coordination includes the Pacific Northwest region from Northern California to Canada where participating entities are implementing monitoring efforts.

The basis of PNAMP is that monitoring will be improved if: all programs use consistent monitoring approaches and protocols; follow a scientific foundation; support monitoring policy and management objectives; and collect and present information in a manner that can be shared. These goals will require considerable effort and commitment to collaboration by many entities and individuals. PNAMP strives to provide the forum where this collaboration can occur and to facilitate the exchange among technical experts and between technical and policy staff that is necessary to accomplish these goals.

PNAMP is largely a coordination body that strives to develop and encourage compatible and standardized data collection, methodologies and access within the Pacific NW including the Columbia River. Most of the current funding comes from BPA to achieve those goals and to help develop tools to facilitate that work. The funding from BPA over the past three years has risen dramatically, primarily to support FCRPS BiOp activities that include coordinated assessments for viable salmonid population parameters (data exchange templates) and monitoring methods.org website.

Recommendations:

1. Budget reduction within the range of 10 to 15%, which is commensurate with the reduction being sought from project managers throughout the Columbia River Basin.
2. In addition BPA should, through direct contracting, find efficiencies in contracted services.
3. PNAMP to report annual priorities to, and seek policy level guidance from, the Council's Fish and Wildlife Committee on an annual basis.

Status of the Resource (SOTR)

The Status of the Resource Project was developed by the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA) with funding from Bonneville Power Administration. The SOTR's purpose is to assess the status of fish and wildlife resources in the Columbia River Basin.

This project's base unit of measurement is the subbasin. The NW Power and Conservation Council funded the development of "Subbasin Plans," which were developed by local entities in order to focus and coordinate fish and wildlife mitigation efforts in these areas. The focal species listed in the SOTR were taken from the Subbasin Plans, as were the biological objectives for most species. The biological objectives for Bull Trout were taken from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Bull Trout Recovery Plan.

CBFWA's memberships and staffing levels have decreased over the past 5 years and no longer represent all the agencies and tribes in the basin. The CBFWA staff continues to provide support to their current members. The CBFWA will manage the Status of the Resource report until April 2013.

Recommendations:

1. Discontinue the Status of the Resources Report.
2. A Council and BPA staff steering committee should develop a one-year (2013) scope of work for technical services to support reporting needs. The scope of work will be based on identified gaps that must be filled resulting from the absence of the SOTR (work, products, technical services, or reports).
3. No later than January 2013 Council meeting, the steering committee will recommend the most economic and efficient means to satisfy the scope of work.

Other Services Proposed by CBFWF - Fish Screening Oversight Committee

The Fish Screening Oversight Committee (FSOC) envisions all stream diversions within the Columbia River Basin properly screened to prevent loss of juvenile salmonids and other species of fish. FSOC is chaired by Bryan Nordlund from NOAA Fisheries and facilitated by Neil Ward from the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The purpose of the FSOC (as described in Section 7.10A1 of the 1994 Fish and Wildlife Program) is to provide overall direction, set priorities and ensure oversight of objectives, funding opportunities, standards, biological criteria and evaluation relative to fish screening activities in the Columbia Basin.

The Fish Screening Oversight Committee has met since the early 1990's to review and learn how to implement the most recent design changes to fish screens.

Recommendation:

1. BPA continue to support the quarterly teleconference meetings and annual training and workshops of the Fish Screening Oversight Committee.