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NW Fishletter #310, November 12, 2012

[3] BPA Finesses Fish And Wildlife Budget Fix

BPA has found enough budget efficiencies and cost deferrals in its direct F&W budget to save \$15 million in FY 2013, the agency's F&W manager Bill Maslen **reported** last week at the November meeting of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council meeting in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

That will put FY 2013 projected spending at \$243 million, Maslen said, about \$6 million less than what was spent in FY 2012. He also said invoices last month were running \$2 million below the previous October.

He said the FY 2013 budget for BiOp-related projects is expected to be about \$99 million, with \$108 million for Accord projects for tribes and states, \$45 million in the general expense category, and another \$18 million for overhead, for a planning budget of \$270 million. Hopefully, that will end up around \$243 million, Maslen said. BPA expects the final costs to come in around 15 percent below the planning budget, while maintaining current Accord, BiOp and F&W program commitments, he told the Council.

Maslen said regional entities worked collaboratively on the budget problem with six entities taking about 10-percent budget hits this year. That includes the Pacific States Marine Fish Commission, ODFW, WDFW, the Nez Perce Tribe, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Kootenai Tribes. Another several million was saved in spending on the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan. Many other projects found some cost savings for this fiscal year as well, Maslen said.

He said BPA is developing some long-term management tools to keep this from happening again, which includes increased oversight of spending, benchmarking contract costs, and more scrutiny of project scope and deliverables. The agency will also limit contract extensions and modifications, in most cases, along with requesting contract spending calendars and specifications of contractual caps on total FY spending for large contracts and portfolios.

Maslen also noted that a "management reserve" fund would be created to cover unexpected spending, and it could be used to pay for land acquisitions at the end of the fiscal year. The agency will also conduct quarterly budget-to-actual reviews at the BPA project manager and policy level, and at the regional level, with the Power Council sponsors and stakeholders.

Spending in FY 2014 and 2015 is expected to go up again, \$254 million and \$260 million, respectively. Back in 2000, the direct F&W budget was slightly over \$100 million a year, and climbed to nearly \$150 million a year by 2008. But it took a big jump in 2009 to \$185 million when the 2008 BiOp was implemented, and

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funding for the Accords began, adding nearly another billion in F&W spending over the 10-year salmon plan. *-B. R.*

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