DRAFT

BPA Staff suggestions for the Wildlife Focus Workgroup/Wildlife Crediting Forum recommendation for future Regional HEP Team

BPA staff developed the following suggestions regarding the future of the Regional HEP Team understanding that Paul Ashley and John Anderson, the two permanent HEP Team staff and leads, will retire by December 2014. These suggestions reflect BPA's view that wildlife mitigation for construction and inundation effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System are complete in much of the region, and can be finished in the remaining areas, primarily southern Idaho, in the next few years.

While the region has Ashley and Anderson available, BPA wants to employ them in tasks that their successors would likely not be as capable of performing. In particular, BPA would like them to concentrate on the HEP related tasks that can inform future policy discussions highlighted in the Council's Wildlife Crediting Forum Report on Forum Deliberations (2011).

- Support for sub-regional "settlement" discussions; in particular, confirm an appropriate matrix for each dam and appropriate models for each matrix.
- Credit on federal lands; e.g., credit from allotments secured or managed with funds provided by BPA.
- Wildlife mitigation secured from Tier 2 fish habitat projects.

- Habitat unit allocation between lower four Columbia River dams, including allocation of pre-Act mitigation addressed in the Geiger Report.

BPA does not want its suggestions to pre-empt the forthcoming Fish and Wildlife Program amendment process that will begin in April 2013, but at the same time the suggestions indicate current thinking at BPA regarding an appropriate future for the Regional HEP Team. Consequently, at this time, BPA makes suggestions for two years only, with out-year suggestions limited to the following general principles and observations.

- The need for additional HEP reports should drive future HEP Team funding.
    - With construction and inundation work nearing completion, the need for HEP on new acquisitions will diminish.
- Currently, BPA needs some follow up HEP capacity to track project agreement compliance on many properties. That need may be diminished or eliminated by two things.
    - First, long term settlements for operation and maintenance.
    - Second, technology may allow the region to more cost effectively track changes in habitat conditions using remote sensing or other techniques.
- BPA does not expect the region to employ HEP to assess operational losses on fish or wildlife. The ISRP does not support expanded use of HEP, and other pilot projects are

already underway to test how best to fulfill that limited need.

- Depending upon results from ongoing pilot projects and the Council's recommendations, it may be appropriate to task the Team to perform the technical testing and evaluation of operational loss models and methodologies or alternative habitat evaluation methods.

Regional HEP Team

- FY 2013: Maintain current RHT staffing and structure
  - Employ Wildlife Crediting Forum standard operating procedures that address variation and species stacking
  - Complete HEP reports for projects where data has been gathered already
  - Conduct baseline surveys and complete HEP reports for new 2012-2013 acquisitions
  - Complete Wildlife Crediting Forum Tier 1 fish habitat project HEP reports
  - Conduct follow-up HEPs on established projects with contested past HEP results
  - Aid BPA as needed in updating ledger with new information from new reports
  - Provide technical support for sub-regional wildlife settlement negotiations. Not all areas can be addressed in FY 2013.
    - Lower four Columbia River dams

            - Address pre-Act mitigation documented as recommended in the Geiger Report
        - Southern Idaho
            - Confirm an appropriate matrix, models, and model inputs for each dam
        - Northern Idaho
            - Confirm an appropriate matrix, models, and model inputs
        - Lower Snake
    - Develop and propose a plan for securely storing historic HEP reports, matrixes, models, and data for as many projects as feasible
    - Develop succession/ transition plan for change in RHT leadership
        - Hire potential HEP Team lead replacement in spring of 2013 to allow two field seasons of training.

- FY 2014: Maintain current RHT staffing and structure with new staff transitioning into leadership roles
    - Complete HEP reports for projects where data has been gathered already
    - Conduct baseline surveys and complete HEP reports for new 2013-2014 acquisitions
    - Complete WCF Tier 2 fish habitat project HEP reports based on list of projects prioritized by BPA and wildlife managers

    - Conduct follow-up HEPs on established projects with contested past HEP results
    - Aid BPA in updating ledger with new information from new reports
    - Continue providing technical support for wildlife settlement negotiations with the following priorities:
  - Implement the plan for securely storing historic HEP reports, matrixes, models, and data for as many projects as feasible
  - Complete succession training for new RHT leadership

- 2015 and beyond: Team constitution and duties commensurate with regional need for ongoing HEP as assessed through the forthcoming program amendment process. BPA expects a reduced scope and need for the Team in the out years because, as discussed above, construction and inundation work will be done relatively soon so no need for HEPs on new acquisitions; the ISRP will not support an expanding role for HEP, so the region should not deploy HEP in working on operational losses; settlements will likely eliminate the need to rely on HEP extensively; and new technology will enable compliance monitoring with a reduced need for on-the-ground follow-up surveys.

Wildlife Crediting Forum

The Council may wish to consider reconvening the Wildlife Crediting Forum to facilitate discussions between resource managers, BPA, the Council, and other interested parties to

consider future Regional HEP Team needs. The outcome of such discussions could be a joint recommendation to the Council in the forthcoming program amendment process.