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June 5, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch

SUBJECT: ISRP review of the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan

Action

As part of the Columbia Plateau, Blue Mountain and Mountain Snake provincial reviews the ISRP reviewed a total of 26 proposals associated with the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan (LSRCP). On April 23, 2002 the ISRP provided their final recommendations (ISRP 2002-6) for these proposals. Council staff will present an overview of the ISRP findings and a staff recommendation to the Fish and Wildlife Committee at your meeting in Bend on June 11, 2002.

Recommendation

Council staff recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Committee accept the review of the projects associated with the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan as provided by the ISRP, and recommend to Bonneville and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that they address the issues raised by the ISRP through participation in the APRE and subbasin planning. The staff recommends that the Committee encourage Bonneville and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acknowledge the ISRP report in the Coordination Exhibit C that is part of the Bonneville/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service direct funding agreement of the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan Program, and to continue to include a commitment to subbasin planning and implementation of the Artificial Production Review in that funding agreement exhibit. The staff further recommends that the Committee ask staff to summarize the ISRP report and how the issues it raises will be addressed in a report to the appropriate Congressional committees as requested in the 1999 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill.

Background

The Lower Snake River Compensation Plan Program (LSRCP) is a complex program to compensate for losses of fish in the Columbia and Snake Rivers due to construction and operation of the hydroelectric system, particularly for the four federal projects on the lower Snake River. The LSRCP program oversees operation and maintenance expenses for ten hatcheries and sixteen

satellite facilities. The projects include adult trapping and juvenile acclimation and release facilities on/or for the lower Snake, Salmon, Clearwater, Walla Walla, Grande Ronde, Imnaha, Tucannon, Touchet, and Walla Walla subbasins.

The program was initiated in response to the Water Resources Development Act of 1976, Public Law (P.L.) 94-587, which Congress adopted to mitigate and compensate for fish and wildlife resource losses caused by the construction and operation of the four federal dams in the lower Snake River -- Ice Harbor (1961), Lower Monumental (1969), Little Goose (1970), and Lower Granite (1975) dams.

The LSRCP program is not part of what is considered the traditional “direct program” funded by Bonneville. Historically, the program (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) received annual congressional appropriations, and Bonneville reimbursed the Treasury for those appropriations. This “reimbursable” program was not originally specifically subject to ISRP and Council review under the 1996 Gorton amendment to the Act. However, in 1998, the U.S. Congress’ Senate-House conference report on the fiscal year 1999 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill directed the Council to have the ISRP to annually review all fish and wildlife projects, programs, or measures included in federal agency budgets that are reimbursed by Bonneville using the same standards and criteria of the 1996 amendment, and to report to Congress on those reviews. The LSRCP is no longer a true “reimbursable” project. Rather, Bonneville and the Service have entered into an agreement where Bonneville funds the program directly (we refer to this as the LSRCP “direct funding agreement.”

It is important to note that neither the 1996 amendment, nor the 1999 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill direct the Council to make formal funding recommendations to Bonneville, or other findings, for the LSRCP program or other non-direct programs in the same way that the Council does for Bonneville direct program projects. While we expect that Bonneville and the project sponsor, in this case the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other cooperators, to take into account the ISRP recommendations and the Council’s advice, the primary mechanism of influence for the Council is through reporting to and advising Congress, as opposed to making funding recommendations to Bonneville. To date, the primary vehicle for addressing the Council’s concerns has been reviewing and commenting on the annual LSRCP direct funding agreement, specifically Exhibit C, which details how the LSRCP program will be coordinated with other Regional Programs. We have included a copy of Exhibit C from last years LSRCP direct funding agreement. You will find that paragraphs 14 and 15 of that Exhibit C are commitments to integrate the LSRCP program with subbasin planning, the APR, and regional prioritization. These are provisions that the Council asked for in past years.

The ISRP first reviewed the LSRCP as part of the “Reimbursable” review in April of 1999, which was limited to a description of the program elements and recommendations to improve the review for the following year. This review responds to many of the recommendations raised by the ISRP in its first report.

In the spring and summer of 2001 the LSRCP cooperators submitted proposal forms consistent with those submitted for the provincial solicitations. In addition, the LSRCP proponents participated in the provincial review workshop, attending the site visits and provided presentations. In total, 26 LSRCP proposals were submitted for review as part of the Columbia Plateau (#6), Blue Mountain and Mountain Snake provincial reviews (#20). Due to time constraints and the complexity of the program over these provinces, the ISRP was unable to review the LSRCP proposals on the same

schedule as other proposals in these provinces and deferred its final review of the LSRCP proposals until they completed their final recommendation for the provinces listed above.

On April 23, 2002 the ISRP provided their final recommendations (ISRP 2002-6) for the LSRCP proposals. The ISRP found the individual LSRCP proposals, as a set, demonstrated that the LSRCP program is implemented in a scientifically sound manner. Many of the project-specific issues raised can be addressed in the LSRCP budget allocation and contracting process, and examined in the Council's Artificial Production Review and Subbasin Planning effort. Of the 26 proposals reviewed one proposal¹ was not justified scientifically and substantial remedial work and subsequent review is needed prior to funding.

The final ISRP recommendation was qualified by the following findings regarding the proposals and the value of their review.

- Multiple Mandates - of the complexity and multiple mandates that seemly provide conflicting direction to fisheries management responsibility and jurisdictional authority in the Columbia River Basin.
- LSRCP mitigation efforts have not met their goals demonstrating disconnect between legislative activities and practices, flawed assumptions regarding smolt-to-adult survival, and inadequacies of the hydrosystem to increase survival. This item raised serious questions regarding the value of the LSRCP especially as it relates to the effects of hatchery fish on wild fish production since most of the Snake basin stocks have ESA status.
- Stock Transfers - discouraged as a management tool for some time, yet inter-basin transfer of fish is practiced in this program. The effect these non-native stock have on success or failure of LSRCP projects on remaining endemic stocks is unknown. In addition, the goals of rebuilding populations through stocking where wild broodstock are taken and returned at rates that have been, for the most part, below replacement, and stocking to provide recreational opportunity are contradictory to wild stock protection and restoration is of concern.
- LSRCP hatcheries need to provide evidence in their proposals that monitoring data are stored in an appropriate consistent database and are available through a distributed system via the Internet.

In conclusion the ISRP recommended that the LSCRP Status Review Symposium is needed in three years with a similar scope to the one that occurred in 1998².

Analysis

Generally, the ISRP was supportive of the program and found that with the proponents are doing a good job with a program of this magnitude, but are concerned regarding the effects that multiple directives are having on the current program. The ISRP also noted the difficulty in assessing the numerous proposals and objectives in the Lower Snake geographic region. They suggested a more programmatic-level review of this geographic region and of the Lower Snake River Compensation Program as the only means to review whether the program has a sound scientific base. A review of this type would also be a useful forum to have appropriate policy and decision makers gain a better understanding of the crippling mandates under which the LSRCP

¹ Project 200120, *Reintroduction evaluation of spring chinook salmon and the study of the early life history of summer steelhead in Lookingglass Creek.*

² Fish and Wildlife Service 1998. Proceedings of the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan Status Review Symposium. Compiled by USFWS, LSRCP, Boise, ID. 276pp.

program currently operates. In addition, the ISRP was concerned with the experimental management referred to in the proposals, but were disappointed by the lack of detail regarding how management decisions are made depending on the resulting data and analyses.

The ISRP also noted the progress made since the 1999 "Reimbursable" review and this review to the quality of the review submittals. They also feel that the continuation and refinement of the LSCRP Status Review Symposium is an ideal opportunity to continue to ensure a sound scientific program.

The staff believes that the issues raised by the ISRP regarding particular project elements are addressable as part of contracting, or through the Exhibit "C" of the MOA between Bonneville and the Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Specifically, the staff believes that the Artificial Production Review and Evaluation, as well as subbasin planning, both of which will occur (or at least be well underway) within the next two years, will serve the purposes of the status review that the ISRP suggests. Further, both the APRE and subbasin planning will require the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to detail the protocols, accomplishments, and objectives of the LSRCP program. The staff believes that the issue that most troubled the ISRP -- multiple mandates driving the operation of the program potentially at cross purposes -- will be made transparent and defined in the APRE, and will require resolution as part of subbasin planning. Therefore, as oppose to recommending a separate status review at this time, staff believes that these initiatives be the vehicle for dealing with the issues raised by the ISRP.

Finally, as part of its obligation to report to Congress under the 1999 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill, the staff suggests that it be directed to develop a report for the Council's review, and upon approval, that the report would be sent to the appropriate congressional representatives and committees summarizing the findings of the ISRP report and how the Council expects to use the APRE and subbasin planning as the vehicle to address them.