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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Erik Merrill, ISAB/ISRP Coordinator, and Jim Ruff, ISAB Ex Officio

**SUBJECT:** ISAB and ISRP Administrative Procedures

### Background, Formation, and Purpose

Independent scientific review for the fish and wildlife program is implemented by two groups: the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) and the Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). Each group provides unique services to the program. The purpose, general tasks, and administrative procedures of the ISAB and the ISRP are described in the Implementation Provisions section of the draft 2009 Program under section VIII.H. Independent Science Review (section VI.B. in the 2000 Program). The information below draws from that Program language and the ISAB's Terms of Reference. The presentation to the Fish and Wildlife Committee will provide further details and examples of how the ISAB and ISRP procedures and reviews are implemented. An in depth history of peer review in the Columbia River Basin is included in the ISRP's Retrospective Report 1997-2005 (see [www.nwcouncil.org/library/isrp/isrp2005-14app.pdf](http://www.nwcouncil.org/library/isrp/isrp2005-14app.pdf)).

### Independent Scientific Advisory Board

In 1996, the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) established the 11-member ISAB to provide independent scientific advice to the region with the intent to avoid gridlock over scientific uncertainty, circumvent unnecessary additional research, and resolve conflicting advice and opinions on recovery issues and measures. In 2002, the Columbia River Indian Tribes joined the Council and NMFS as partners in the ISAB's administrative oversight. The ISAB provides an on-call scientific body for peer-review of various reports, plans, and issues affecting Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife. The ISAB operates under a Terms of Reference jointly agreed to by the Council, NOAA Fisheries, and the Columbia River Indian Tribes.

### **Independent Scientific Review Panel**

The 1996 amendment to the Power Act directed the Council to appoint an 11-member panel of independent scientists and additional peer review groups. These scientists review individual projects that are funded or proposed to be funded by the Bonneville Power Administration. Using criteria specified in the Act, the ISRP reviews these projects on their scientific merit in the context of the program and makes recommendations on scientific aspects and other “matters related to” those projects. The Council must fully consider the ISRP’s reports prior to making funding recommendations to Bonneville and must explain in writing wherever the Council’s recommendations differ from the ISRP’s.

## **Organizational Structure**

### **ISAB Administrative Oversight Panel**

Unlike the ISRP that is solely under the Council’s purview, the ISAB is governed by an Administrative Oversight Panel consisting of the Council Chair; a senior representative of the Columbia Basin Indian Tribes; and the Director of NOAA’s Northwest Fisheries Science Center and the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service as joint participants. The Oversight Panel’s primary responsibilities are to appoint ISAB members and approve the ISAB’s annual work plan.

### **ISAB Non-Voting, Ex Officio Members**

The Council, Tribes, and NOAA Fisheries can each appoint one non-voting, Ex Officio member to the group. These members are senior staff scientists that meet the criteria for ISAB membership and are familiar with the fish and wildlife recovery plans of the Council, Tribes, and NOAA Fisheries. They are expected to provide their scientific advice independent of the policies of their employing agencies. They serve on the ISAB’s executive committee.

### **Officers and Executive Committees**

The ISRP and ISAB each elect a chair, a vice-chair, and two at-large members who serve on the groups’ executive committees. The executive committees address issues of procedure, workplan, and internal matters of the Board. The chairs are the primary spokespeople for the groups.

### **Science Coordinator**

The groups have a science coordinator to assist the groups and to act as liaison between the groups and the Council, Tribes, and NOAA Fisheries. The coordinator is the point of contact between the groups and other organizations and committees in the region. The coordinator works closely with the groups’ chairs, acts as a resource to the groups, and should be familiar with the policy and scientific issues that are likely to come before the groups.

### **Budget Administration**

The groups are part of the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and are funded by Bonneville. The Council administers the Bonneville grant and the individual ISAB and ISRP member contracts. Members are paid an hourly rate for approved tasks and reimbursed for travel.

## **Membership**

### **Appointment Process**

The appointment procedures for the ISAB, ISRP, and the pool of Peer Review Group members follow three steps. The first two steps are the same for each group. First, the Council, in cooperation with the ISAB Oversight Panel, invites the region to submit nominations. Second, the National Academy of Sciences screens the list of nominees based on their scientific credentials. Third, based on the list of recommendations, the ISAB Oversight Panel appoints ISAB members. The Council alone appoints ISRP and Peer Review Group members.

### **Expertise**

The ISAB and ISRP's governing documents call for membership to include expertise in anadromous and resident fish ecology; statistics; modeling; wildlife ecology; genetics; fisheries; fish passage/bioengineering; fish husbandry; ocean and estuary ecology; geomorphology; and socio-economics. Pacific Northwest scientists with expertise in Columbia River anadromous fish and non-anadromous fish must be included.

### **Qualifications**

Members should have a strong record of scientific accomplishment, high standards of scientific integrity, the ability to forge creative solutions to complex problems, and a demonstrated ability to work effectively in an interdisciplinary setting.

### **Conflicts of interest**

ISAB, ISRP and Scientific Peer Review Group members are subject to the conflict of interest standards that apply to scientists performing comparable work for the National Academy of Sciences. Members are expected to refrain from activities that might constitute a conflict of interest or raise the appearance of undue bias during their terms.

### **Terms**

ISRP and ISAB membership terms are normally for three years, not to exceed two consecutive terms.

### **ISRP Peer Review Group and ISAB Ad Hoc Members**

The ISRP may enlist Peer Review Group members to assist in reviews on an as needed basis. From the Council-appointed pool of Peer Review Group members, the ISRP selects reviewers who have the appropriate expertise for the review at issue. Similarly, the ISAB may enlist ad hoc members to assist in reviews that require outside expertise. Temporary appointees to the groups are selected using the same criteria as for regular members and are subject to the same rules regarding bias and conflict of interest as regular members.

## **Review Responsibilities**

The ISRP and ISAB are standing groups that conduct reviews throughout the year. Recommendations from the groups are reached by consensus. The ISAB conducts reviews in a manner consistent with its terms of reference and procedures policy. To gather information needed to independently evaluate projects using the Act's criteria, the ISRP develops guidelines

for reviews that describe materials needed, site-visit protocols, and limits to reviewer and project sponsor communication. ISRP and ISAB reports and background information are posted on the Council's website at [www.nwcouncil.org/fw/science.htm](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/science.htm).

### **Independent Scientific Review Panel**

The ISRP has responsibilities for scientific review in three areas:

1. Review projects proposed for Bonneville funding to implement the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program
2. Retrospective review of program accomplishments

The 1996 amendment also directs the ISRP, with assistance from the Scientific Peer Review Groups, to annually review the results of prior-year expenditures based upon the project review criteria and submit its findings to the Council. The retrospective review should focus on the measurable benefits to fish and wildlife made through projects funded by Bonneville and previously reviewed. Also, the ISRP should summarize major basinwide programmatic issues identified during project reviews.

3. Review projects funded through Bonneville's reimbursable program

In 1998, the U.S. Congress' Senate-House conference report on the Fiscal Year 1999 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill directed the ISRP to review the fish and wildlife projects, programs, or measures included in federal agency budgets that are reimbursed by Bonneville, using the same standards and making recommendations as in its review of the projects proposed to implement the Council's program.

Although some now have direct funding agreements, in 1998, the four major components of the reimbursable program were:

- Columbia River Fisheries Mitigation Program (Corps of Engineers),
- Fish and Wildlife Operations and Maintenance Budget (Corps of Engineers),
- Lower Snake River Compensation Plan (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and
- Leavenworth Hatchery (Bureau of Reclamation).

### **Independent Scientific Advisory Board**

The ISAB's Terms of Reference establish review tasks specific to the programs of the Council, NOAA Fisheries, and Tribes. In addition to those tasks, regional entities can request reviews, and the ISAB can self-generate assignments. Review strategies and questions are developed in an iterative process between the ISAB and Ex Officio representatives from the Council, NOAA Fisheries, and Tribes. Assignments are approved by the ISAB's Administrative Oversight Panel.

ISAB tasks include:

1. Evaluate the fish and wildlife program on its scientific merits in time to inform amendments to the fish and wildlife program and before the Council requests recommendations from the region.

2. Evaluate NMFS recovery plans for Columbia River Basin stocks and aspects of the recovery process when requested.
3. Review the scientific and technical issues associated with efforts to improve anadromous fish survival through all life stages, based on adaptive management approaches.
4. Review and provide advice on priorities for conservation and recovery efforts, including research, monitoring and evaluation.
5. Provide scientific advice and review of topics identified as critical to fish recovery and conservation in the Columbia River Basin.
6. Evaluate the scientific merits of plans and measures proposed to ensure satisfaction and continuation of tribal treaty fishing rights in the Columbia River Basin and other tribal efforts to restore and manage fish and wildlife resources.
7. Provide specific scientific advice on topics and questions requested from the region or the ISAB itself and approved by the Oversight Panel by majority vote.

## **Conclusion**

The ISAB and ISRP's organizational structure and administrative procedures have resulted in over a decade of the groups' successful operations, independence, and high relevancy to decision-making, planning, and management for Columbia River fish and wildlife resources. These procedures have also been used as a model for many other science groups in the region.