

Bruce A. Measure
Chair
Montana

Rhonda Whiting
Montana

W. Bill Booth
Idaho

James A. Yost
Idaho



Joan M. Dukes
Vice-Chair
Oregon

Bill Bradbury
Oregon

Tom Karier
Washington

Phil Rockefeller
Washington

January 4, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairman Booth and Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Therese Hampton, Forum Chair and Tony Grover, Fish and Wildlife Director

SUBJECT: Fish Tagging Forum Update

The Fish Tagging Forum has met twice in 2011 and has focused on gaining an understanding of the Council's objectives for the Forum and developing a path forward to meet those objectives. The Forum also began to explore the tagging technologies, methods and applications in the Columbia Basin by hearing from experts at the Army Corps of Engineers, Grant PUD, Chelan PUD and the U.S. Geological Survey regarding acoustic tags.

Objectives

The following is extracted from the charter for the fish tagging forum:

The Fish Tagging Forum will advise the Council regarding the following issues. Activities of the Forum will include:

- (A) Developing and recommending to the Council a commonly accepted description of fish tagging funded by Bonneville Power Administration, including what fish are tagged and released and recovered, in what numbers, where, by what entity, for what purposes and at what cost.*
- (B) Recommendations to the Council on ways to improve the cost effectiveness of fish tagging under the Fish and Wildlife Program.*
- (C) Recommendations to the Council on ways to improve the program effectiveness of fish tagging to address key management questions under the Fish and Wildlife Program.*
- (D) Describe the various data systems used to organize and track tagging data including recovery information.*
- (E) Describe the degree of coordination within and among tagging efforts and recommend improvements in coordination within and among tagging efforts where efficiencies and cost effectiveness may be improved.*

(F) What is the objective of each tagging effort and are the right tags being used, or proposed to be used, to accomplish that objective. If the objective can be achieved by different means, how does the cost differ between options?

(G) Review issues related to fish tagging, such as the adequacy of geographic coverage, span of species diversity or completeness of life cycle tracking. The forum could provide recommendations on cost efficient, technologically practical and acceptable changes to current tagging programs.

The Forum discussed the Council objectives at the first meeting, with consideration about how to achieve the objectives and what the scope of the Forum's activities would be. The result of the Forum discussions was to engage the objectives in the following manner:

A. Developing and recommending to the Council a commonly accepted description of fish tagging funded by Bonneville Power Administration, including what fish are tagged and released and recovered, in what numbers, where, by what entity, for what purposes and at what cost. Additionally, the forum participants will describe similar efforts in the Columbia Basin that are outside of the BPA funded programs including their connection to answering multiple management questions. The descriptions will include identification of the obligation or authority that drives the tagging effort.

B. Recommendations to the Council on ways to improve the cost effectiveness of fish tagging under the Fish and Wildlife Program.

C. Recommendations to the Council on ways to improve the program effectiveness of fish tagging to address key management questions under the Fish and Wildlife Program. (Considerations regarding and attributes of "effectiveness" will need to be defined as part of the forum.)

New Objective 1: Recommend "fair share" allocation of responsibilities for funding fish tagging relative to each management question. Forum participants feel that a discussion of fair share, which was not within the ISAB's mandate, is an important factor in determining the policy issues related to tagging efforts funded by BPA.

New Objective 2: Respond, as appropriate, to 2009 ISRP recommended actions.

The Forum members felt that some work needed to happen first, before some of the Council's objectives could be accomplished. As a result the Forum recommends that the following preliminary work is required to support the above objectives above:

1. Originally Objective (D): Describe the various data systems used to organize and track tagging data including recovery information.

2. Originally Objective (E): Describe the degree of coordination within and among tagging efforts and recommend improvements in coordination within and among tagging efforts where efficiencies and cost effectiveness may be improved.

3. Originally Objective (F): What is the objective of each tagging effort and are the right tags being used, or proposed to be used, to accomplish that objective.

4. Originally Objective (G): Review issues related to fish tagging, such as the adequacy of geographic coverage, span of species diversity, adverse biological impacts or completeness of life cycle tracking. The forum could provide recommendations on cost efficient, technologically practical and acceptable changes to current tagging programs.

5. NEW: Description of future considerations related to management questions and related fish tagging efforts.

To ensure clarity in communication the Forum infers the definition of “Tagging” includes: tagging, release, recovery of tags, and assessment; which is the full life-cycle of a tagging effort.

The Forum members have agreed the following outcomes for the Fish Tagging Forum are desirable:

- Develop a common understanding and documentation of relationship between current tagging efforts and management questions.
- Identify opportunities to improve coordination, efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- Make recommendations to the Council for improving cost and program effectiveness.

Technologies

The first technology explored in detail was acoustic tagging (tags that make a sound that is detectable through underwater listening devices). The next technology to be reviewed will be genetic tagging and tracking methods.

Attached is a draft table that includes the information related to acoustic tagging which has been gathered from the experts at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chelan PUD, Grant PUD and the U.S. Geological Survey.