

Joan M. Dukes
Chair
Oregon

Bruce A. Measure
Montana

James A. Yost
Idaho

W. Bill Booth
Idaho



Rhonda Whiting
Vice-Chair
Montana

Bill Bradbury
Oregon

Tom Karier
Washington

Phil Rockefeller
Washington

May 31, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee members

FROM: Tony Grover, Fish and Wildlife Division Director
Patty O'Toole, Program Implementation Manager

SUBJECT: Next steps on Ocean Research Projects

PROPOSED ACTION: Staff will discuss a draft schedule to re-scope the Ocean projects that as approved by the Council at the May 2012 Council meeting.

At the May Council meeting the Council recommended continuing two ocean research projects, project #1998-014-00, NOAA's ocean survival of salmonids, and project #2003-009-00, Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans, at a level sufficient to maintain project integrity, while Council staff works with the project sponsors, Bonneville and interested others in the region. Staff expects the process described below will allow the Council to make a decision by February of 2013 to redefine the scope of the research as presented by staff and recommended by Council.

This re-shaping of ocean research under the Fish and Wildlife Program should enhance how the ocean research benefits fish affected by the FCRPS through: 1) improving the linkages to potential management applications associated with hatcheries, habitat, hydropower operations, and essential survival calculations; 2) emphasizing research related to the Columbia River plume, the near shore ocean and estuary areas; 3) exploring the feasibility of collecting information on other species of concern; and 4) contributing to the development and tracking of High Level Indicators adopted by the Council. The reshaped ocean research plan should assess how the projects are relevant to and assist in the achievement of the Council's current Fish and Wildlife Program objectives, 2008 Biological Opinion requirements and ISRP guidance.

In June staff will briefly describe how elements of structured decision making could be applied in re-scoping Program ocean research and a draft accelerated time table for re-scoping. Please note that due to the late addition of this item to the agenda the information in this memorandum has not been fully vetted with other entities.

Draft time table for re-scoping ocean research

- June: Organize a structured decision process, recruit appropriate participants and secure meeting dates.
- July-Oct: 1) Convene one or more workshops to review results of ocean research with fisheries managers and interested others and discuss freshwater management implications. The results of these discussions would be used in step 2 below.
- 2) Develop and analyze alternatives for ocean research using some elements of structured decision making, as recommended by the ISRP.
- Oct: Check in with Fish and Wildlife Committee to review progress to date and to review alternatives, collect feedback from Committee members
- Nov-Dec: Proposal development and ISRP review if necessary

The October discussion with the Fish and Wildlife Committee will be important, as it will be a decision point about adapting the existing ocean projects to the new scope of work, or the alternative of seeking proposals for the new scope of work, or discontinuing direct support for ocean research. If either of the first two alternatives is selected, then the ISRP will need to review the existing projects under the new scope or any new proposals for the ocean work.

Staff is seeking the Fish and Wildlife Committee's support for the above described process, or an alternative process as modified by the Committee, to begin implementing the May 2012 Council decision on ocean research.