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April 28, 2011

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council decision on Project #2010-086-00 *Protect and Restore the Crooked and American River Watersheds*, a BiOp project.

PROPOSED ACTION: The Fish and Wildlife Committee recommends to the Council implementation of this project.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Currently the project has outlined an expense budget of \$3,027,600 for Fiscal Year 2011 through 2014.

BACKGROUND

On November 2, 2010, Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) and Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) submitted a tributary habitat project intended to assist in satisfying commitments under the 2008 Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (BiOp) for Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) review. Under Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) Action 35 of the BiOp, the Action Agencies (AAs) committed to achieve habitat quality improvement targets in tributaries used by specific populations of Chinook and steelhead. The purpose of the submitted proposals is to construct on-the-ground habitat restoration actions that help the AAs meet BiOp-established targets for the South Fork Clearwater River population of threatened Snake River steelhead.

The goal of this project is to protect and restore the Crooked and American river Watersheds for the benefit of both anadromous and resident fish using a ridge-top-to-ridge-top restoration approach with the primary focus on addressing identified habitat factors that limit abundance and productivity of the threatened Snake River Steelhead South Fork Clearwater River population. This project is a cooperative effort between the NPT, Nez Perce National Forest, BLM, and private landowners.

Proposed restoration actions will focus on restoring the mainstem (Crooked River) and tributary stream restoration, reducing sedimentation from the existing road/trail system through decommissioning/improving roads, replacing or removing failed and/or barrier stream crossings, and possible land acquisitions.

On December 9, 2010, the ISRP requested additional information from the proponents in order to determine whether the proposal met scientific criteria (ISRP document 2010-43). No public comment was received on the ISRP review.

The ISRP requested additional detail on the following:

- *Provide an overview of the criteria and methods for assessing and prioritizing roads and stream crossings.*
- *Provide details relating to the Maines Estate.*
- *Discuss how adaptive management will be implemented.*
- *Explicitly define and differentiate the implementation, status and trends, and effectiveness monitoring components of this project with at least an overview of study design, metrics, and methods of measurement. How does the Habitat Status and Trend monitoring program proposed by the Nez Perce Tribe in collaboration with ISEMP and CHaMP relate specifically to this project?*

On February 17, 2011 the Council received a response from Bonneville and on March 16, 2011 the Council received the ISRP's final review (ISRP document 2011-9). The ISRP found that the proposal met scientific review criteria.

ANALYSIS

The ISRP found that the NPT had adequately addressed the requested information needs. As part of their final review the panel provided specific comments to the NPT intended to strengthen the implementation of the project and for future reviews. Additionally, the monitoring associated with this project is being proposed for incorporation with the Integrated Status and Effectiveness Monitoring Program (ISEMP) and the new Columbia Habitat Monitoring Program (CHaMP).

It is important to note that this project, if recommended, will be included in the anticipated geographical categorical review (Habitat) that will provide the proponent an opportunity to provide an update on the project's progress on their restoration efforts.

Based on the ISRP review, the Fish and Wildlife Committee recommends that the Council support the implementation of this project.