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May 27, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council decision on Project #2008-719-00, *Research Non-Indigenous Actions*, a BiOp project.

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

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The initial Fiscal Year 2010 BPA Planning Budget for this project is estimated at \$350,000.

BACKGROUND

On December 18, 2009, the Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) submitted a 2008 Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion (BiOp) project narrative for review by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP). The 2008 FCRPS BiOp is a 10-year operations and configuration plan to mitigate for the adverse effects of the hydro-system on the 13 listed fish under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The BiOp's Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) calls for Bonneville and the other federal Action Agencies to implement specific mitigation actions to avoid jeopardy and adverse modification of the critical habitat of ESA listed Columbia River fish. This project is intended to address RPA 44 which commits to developing strategies to reduce non-indigenous fish.

On January 19, 2010, the ISRP requested additional information from the proponents in order to determine whether the proposal met scientific criteria (ISRP document 2010-4). No public comment was received on the ISRP review.

On April 29, 2010 the Council received a response from the U. S. Geological Survey and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Council received the ISRP's final review (ISRP document 2010-15) of the revised proposal on May 25, 2010. The ISRP found that the proposal met scientific review criteria ("qualified").

The goal of this research project is to address key uncertainties regarding the food habits of non-native predators in the lower Columbia River during the late summer and fall and to assess the role of juvenile American shad in their diets in terms of any impacts on their health and condition. In addition, the project will evaluate the potential efficacy of localized removals of smallmouth bass for predation control. The project has the following objectives:

- Documenting the food habits and the physiological condition of smallmouth bass, walleye, and channel catfish in three reservoirs of the lower Columbia River during the late summer and fall (Objectives 1 and 2); and
- Describing and comparing relative density and diet of smallmouth bass between sites perceived to be “hot spots” and sites nearby (Objective 3).

ANALYSIS

The ISRP found the proponents did a thorough job of revising the proposal to adequately address the ISRP’s recommendations and comments and that information collected by the project will be useful in evaluating the impacts of non-native fishes on salmon recovery in the Columbia River Basin. The qualification raised by the ISRP addresses their concern regarding the study design associated with the dietary comparisons (Objective 3) – specifically the ISRP is concerned about the ability to collect adequate numbers of smallmouth bass (i.e., sample size) in the different habitats of the forebay and tailrace to make this comparison. The ISRP raises this concern and states that the outcome can be addressed in future project submissions.

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