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October 29, 2009

## DECISION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

**SUBJECT:** Council decision on Project #2008-306-00, *Deschutes River Fall Chinook Research and Monitoring*, a Columbia Basin Fish Accord project.

**PROPOSED ACTION:** The Council staff recommends that the Council support the project for implementation with the condition that the responses and the qualifications identified by the ISRP (ISRP document 2009-25) be addressed as part of contracting (i.e., Objective 1) and be reflected in future reviews (i.e., Objective 3).

### BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The total amount associated with this Accord project equals \$1,913,835 (e.g., ranges from \$198,716 to \$222,968 per year<sup>1</sup>) in expense funds for Fiscal Years 2008 through 2017. A contract (#41329) associated with the project has been executed and reflects a performance period of February 15, 2009 to February 14, 2010 at \$198,716.

### BACKGROUND

In 2008-2009, the Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (the "Action Agencies") signed agreements with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN), and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC). The agreement with these Tribes and CRITFC is referred to as the Three Treaty Tribes MOA. The Action Agencies also signed agreements with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT), the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (SBT), and the states of Idaho, Montana, and Washington. These agreements are known as the Columbia Basin Fish Accords.

As set forth in the guidance document outlining the review process for the Accords, the Council recognizes Bonneville's commitment to Accord projects. The Accords do not, however, alter the

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<sup>1</sup> This range includes the anticipated 2.5-percent annual inflation adjustment, beginning in Fiscal Year 2010.

Council's responsibilities with respect to independent scientific review of project proposals or the Council's role following such reviews. As with all projects in the Fish and Wildlife Program, Accord projects are subject to review by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP), and the Council provides funding recommendations based on full consideration of the ISRP's report and the Council's Program.

On November 4, 2008, the Council received from Bonneville a Columbia Basin Fish Accord proposal from the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, #2008-306-00, *Deschutes River Fall Chinook Research and Monitoring*.<sup>2</sup> The proposal was submitted to the ISRP for review, and on December, 12, 2008 the ISRP provided a review (ISRP document 2008-15). The ISRP members requested additional information before they could determine if the proposal met scientific criteria.

On June 10, 2009 the Council received a response from Bonneville, and on June 30, 2009 the Council received the final review from the ISRP (ISRP document 2009-25). The ISRP found that the proposal "Meets Scientific Review Criteria In Part (Qualified)." No public comment was received on the ISRP review.

The goal of the project is to develop methods to improve escapement estimates for Deschutes River fall Chinook, validate existing methods, and address unknowns such as smolt-to-adult ratios to reduce the potential impacts of overharvest and evaluate other forms of direct mortality.

Objective 1: *Determine the genetic composition of the lower Deschutes River*

Objective 2: *Determine the feasibility of installing a full duplex PIT tag reader in the Deschutes River*

Objective 3: *Develop a method for continuous, accurate escapement estimates*

Objective 4: *Validation aerial redd counts*

Objective 5: *Conduct Carcass Surveys*

The ISRP found the proposal met scientific review criteria for two of the five objectives (Objectives 2 and 5). The ISRP provided an "in part" recommendation for Objective 1 and requested that clarity be provided regarding ongoing research, but more importantly to provide reporting on the feasibility of investigations that would demonstrate that there is an ability to differentiate hatchery and wild Chinook accurately with the proposed genetic analysis. The ISRP "qualified" Objective 4 to ensure that a minor point be addressed as part of a future review.<sup>3</sup> Objective 3 does not qualify for review, at this time, due to its dependence on the outcome of Objective 2.

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<sup>2</sup> The proposal is listed in the May 2008 agreement in Attachment B.2, New, Category 3.

<sup>3</sup> ISRP asked for additional information on how redds would be distinguished between surveys.

On July 28, 2009 during a conference call with Bonneville and CTWSRO discussing the anticipated packet material for the August Council meeting a request was made to Council staff for a teleconference with the ISRP to clarify their concerns regarding Objective 1.

On October 15, 2009 a teleconference was conducted with CTWSRO and the ISRP. During the discussion it was determined that the concerns that the ISRP expressed in its review (ISRP document 2009-25) regarding Objective 1 were two-fold. First the initial proposal did not acknowledge that there was no hatchery production associated with the Deschutes River fall Chinook and secondly there was a need for additional detail necessary to differentiate the wild Chinook accurately through genetic analysis. The CTWSRO and the ISRP provided a better understanding of the current life histories in the subbasin during the teleconference.<sup>4</sup> In regard to the additional detail associated with the genetic analysis, the ISRP believes that genetic stock assessment of the individual returning adult fish to the Deschutes is an appropriate tool to explore for incorporating genetic data into escapement estimates. The ISRP believes that this information can be addressed as part of contracting.

## **ANALYSIS**

The teleconference was very helpful for the ISRP and CTWSRO to clarify the information needs associated with the genetic analysis associated with Objective 1 and confirmed that the details would be addressed in contracting.

Though the ISRP was unable to provide a recommendation for Objective 3, due to the need for a successful outcome of Objective 2 prior to initiating Objective 3's design work, the ISRP stated that the inclusion of the objective regarding escapement modeling is reasonable to meet project goals. The CTWSRO is well aware of challenges associated with the implementation of a full duplex array in the Deschutes River, but hopes to accomplish that before 2017. If and when appropriate the CTWSRO will submit details regarding this objective for ISRP review.

The Council staff recommends that the Council support the project for implementation with the condition that the responses and the qualifications identified by the ISRP (ISRP document 2009-25) be addressed as part of contracting (i.e., Objective 1) and be reflected in future reviews (i.e., Objective 3).

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<sup>4</sup> The ISRP had obtained this information through other sources prior to the teleconference that resolves this portion of their concern