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May 28, 2009

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council decision on Project #2008-503-00, *Studies into Factors Limiting the Abundance of Okanogan and Wenatchee Sockeye Salmon*, a Columbia Basin Fish Accord project.

PROPOSED ACTION: The Council staff recommends that the Council support this project for implementation.

BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The total amount associated with this Accord project equals \$2,464,767 (e.g., ranges from \$203,226 to \$274,141 per year¹) in expense funds for Fiscal Years 2008 through 2017. A contract (#41658) is pending with a performance period of April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010 at \$251,671.

BACKGROUND

In 2008-2009, Bonneville, 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 (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 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 Council's responsibilities with respect to independent science review or the Council's role

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

following such review. 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 April 28, 2009, the Council received from Bonneville a Columbia Basin Fish Accord proposal from the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) for #2009-001-00, *Studies into Factors Limiting the Abundance of Okanagan and Wenatchee Sockeye Salmon*.²

The proposal was submitted to the ISRP for review, and on May 22, 2009 the ISRP provided a review (ISRP document 2009-18). The ISRP found that the proposal "Meets Scientific Review Criteria (Qualified)".

The goal of this proposal is to explore factors limiting production of Okanagan and Wenatchee sockeye salmon stocks. A primary factor affecting the Okanagan stock is believed to be survival upstream of Wells Dam. To quantify this mortality, this project will fund PIT tag detection antennas in the Okanagan River as well as a Vertical Diversion Structure upstream of Osoyoos Lake (through which runs the border between the United States and Canada). This project will be phased in over three years. Initially the project will focus on the Okanagan stock as there are a number of projects that can be immediately implemented that will build on present supplementation, habitat restoration, and water-management programs. A plan for Wenatchee sockeye research will be developed in the first two years of this project, after which the focus of this project is expected to shift more to this stock.

ANALYSIS

The ISRP found that the project could provide valuable information about the sockeye salmon in the upper Columbia River. The information generated by the proposed PIT and acoustic tagging of Wenatchee and Okanagan sockeye salmon would be useful in the management of these stocks. Details regarding the locations of adult mortality could also be very useful in designing and prioritizing future habitat restoration efforts in the Upper Columbia. The ISRP did state that the following issues, if addressed, would benefit the project as it is developed for implementation.

- Thoroughly consider the possible factors that may be contributing to adult sockeye mortality between Wells Dam and Skaha Lake;
- Fully consider the methods by which mortality rates will be associated with water quality and other habitat conditions and the availability of water quality and habitat data on which to base these analyses;
- Before implementing the projects already planned for the Okanagan River, develop a sufficient rationale as to why these projects should proceed prior to identifying key limiting factors for this population;

² The proposal is listed in the May 2008 agreement in Attachment B, Category 2c, new

- Undertake a more complete consideration of the role that hatchery sockeye may be playing in the poor performance of the Wenatchee stock;

In addition, the ISRP requested that future proposals include additional details on the acoustic tagging methods and more thorough description of facilities and equipment.

CRITFC appreciates the review and feels the comments received are helpful and will take these items into account in implementing this project.

Based on the ISRP review, and the confidence that the sponsor understands the need to address the items raised by the ISRP in the implementation of this project, the Council staff recommends that the Council support this project for implementation.