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April 30, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Change in process on adoption of within-year adjustments

At the May meeting, Council staff will provide a brief overview of the current BOG process and explore interest in streamlining that process. No formal decision from the members is necessary at this meeting; staff is presenting the idea to obtain member feedback before going any further with the concept.

The idea behind the change in process is to create more time at Council meetings for presentations on various topics related to the Fish and Wildlife Program.

BACKGROUND:

In Fiscal Year 2004, Bonneville, the Council and the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority formed a Budget Oversight Group (BOG) to track budget adjustments and modification requests through the fiscal Year. The BOG meets monthly on the Wednesday prior to regularly scheduled Council meetings. A principle role of the BOG is to validate whether the budget requests are a reschedule or within-year request (i.e., scope change, budget change, scope/budget change, reschedule, or new request). Reschedules are forwarded to Bonneville for assessment and funding as funds become available. Within-year requests are placed into one or more of the sorting categories (1-5) and forwarded to Bonneville for a recommendation on the availability of funds as identified in quarterly reviews.

The BOG uses quarterly reviews to prioritize budget adjustment requests based on available funding from the current fiscal year project budget. This process includes a public comment period.

Since 2004, the BOG process has been updated numerous times to be more proactive, coordinated (internally and externally), and to provide a more rigorous review of the requests. Most recently, in May 2008, the Council adopted a threshold for within-year budget adjustment management.

ANALYSIS

Council staff finds value in the formality of the BOG process. In order to open up more time on Council meeting agendas for presentations on relevant fish and wildlife issues, however, the staff is looking at ways to streamline the BOG process.

There are several approaches that could be used to assist in this effort. One approach would be similar to the review and decision process used by the Council with water transactions proposals.

The following are key elements of BOG that should be retained regardless of the approach selected:

- Members must be able to request further discussion on any BOG issue at Council meetings
- State staff will continue to be involved in the review process - at BOG meetings and through comment
- Tracking and documentation of the review process will continue
- Decision documents and letters will still be drafted and circulated
- Public process will continue to function as it has in the past with public updates of BOG results and the opportunity for public comment
- Quarterly updates of adjustments will continue to be announced at Council meetings to ensure adequate notice
- Items that warrant policy direction will continue to be brought before the Council -- as part of the quarterly summary