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March 31, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee members

FROM: Mark Fritsch, project implementation manager

SUBJECT: Council decision on Project #2007-092-00 *Protect and Restore Selway River Watershed*, a BiOp project.

PROPOSED ACTION: The Council staff recommends that 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 \$800,000 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 Selway River population of threatened Snake River steelhead.

As stated in the proposal the overall goal of the project is to restore the physical and biological characteristics of the Selway River watershed to provide quality habitat for anadromous and resident fish. The NPT will work closely with the Nez Perce National Forest and implement efforts that will focus on replacing migration barriers adding to available habitat, reducing road densities to address excessive sedimentation, and restoring the riparian corridor to reduce stream temperatures.

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:

- *Clarify the proposed actions in the O'Hara Creek watershed regarding cattle grazing and water temperatures.*
- *Provide an overview of the criteria and methods for assessing and prioritizing roads and stream crossings.*
- *Provide additional information regarding the role of sediment in project streams.*
- *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 done a "good job" in responding to their comments at a technical level. In addition, as part of their review the panel provided comments regarding the response that provided insight on areas of improvement that would strengthen this project for future reviews. This project may be linked in the future to the monitoring associated with the 2008 NOAA Fisheries FCRPS BiOp for fish in/fish out and Habitat Status and Trend monitoring.

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 to provide an update on the project's progress on their restoration efforts.

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