

From: Hanrahan, Timothy P
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2006 3:31 PM
To: Baugh, Zenobia
Subject: FY07-09 comments for 200303800

Dear Council members and staff,

I am writing to follow-up on the recent Draft FY07-09 Council Recommendations for Fish and Wildlife Program funding. I would like to offer some comments on project 200303800 (Evaluate restoration potential of Snake River fall Chinook salmon spawning habitat) for consideration by Council members and Council staff during the final funding decision making process. This project was reviewed as part of the mainstem/systemwide group of proposals.

1. I believe that project 200303800 was mis-categorized by the mainstem/systemwide review team (MSRT) as "recommended action," when it should be part of the "core program." Project 200303800 is an explicit UPA project. The project is specifically identified in the Final Implementation Plan for the UPA (May 2005) on page 41, Table 22. According to the prioritization categories and criteria listed on page 12, Attachment 4 of the MSRT Process document (www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2007/ms/process.pdf), project 200303800 should be categorized as "core program."

2. This project is specifically identified in the Implementation Plan (page 41, Table 22) as one of the hydrosystem RM&E projects that the Action Agencies will implement in the 2005-2007 timeframe to address their UPA commitments. Table 22 identifies projects and the associated strategies and objectives for the 2005-2007 timeframe and long-term targets (2010) (page 39). The project scopes listed in Table 22 are for the 2005-2007 timeframe, and not the long-term targets as that scope was unknown at the time the IP was finalized.

3. This project accomplishes high priority work under the Action Agencies Final Updated Proposed Action for the FCRPS BiOp Remand (24 November 2004). The Final UPA identifies "Restoration potential of Snake River fall Chinook salmon spawning habitat" as one of the priorities that the Action Agencies will continue to fund as part of their "RME Strategy 3: Critical Uncertainties Research" (page 101). Note that the geographic scope of this statement in the UPA is the Snake River, and not limited to the tailrace areas of two dams. The initial focus of project 200303800 was at Ice Harbor and Lower Granite dams because those areas showed potential, and because budgetary constraints precluded investigations of the entire lower Snake River during the initial year of study. However, all potential riverine habitat in the lower Snake River should be evaluated for potential fall Chinook salmon spawning habitat.

4. This is the only BPA or Corps project concerning Snake River fall Chinook salmon spawning habitat. Thus, this is the only project addressing this component of the Final UPA ("RME Strategy 3: Critical Uncertainties Research", page 101).

5. The ISRP gave a very favorable review ("fundable") of this project's FY07-09 proposal, including that, "The additional work coupled with the hydrodynamic modeling should be very helpful to hydrosystem operators."

6. In the context of the uncertainty of potential fall Chinook salmon spawning habitat in the entire lower Snake River, there is much work that remains to be done. This work includes looking at other areas of the lower Snake River not evaluated during FY05-07, including the tailrace areas of Little Goose and Lower Monumental dams. The remaining work necessary also includes evaluations of habitat quality (as identified in the FY07-09 proposal) in order to provide accurate estimates of future habitat use (so as not to develop unrealistic recovery goals for fall Chinook salmon spawning). Note that research into habitat quality (e.g., hyporheic exchange) was identified in the original proposal (35007) for FY04 but was removed at the request of BPA from the FY04 scope of work due to budgetary constraints.

7. This project has made significant progress to date, which provides momentum for completing

research into the remaining uncertainties identified above. If this project is not continued for FY07-09, this momentum will be lost, and BPA's ability to address uncertainties identified in the BiOp will be hindered.

8. The proposed project budget for FY07-09 is a relatively small investment for addressing the associated fall Chinook salmon spawning habitat uncertainties identified in the BiOp.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding this project. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Tim

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