

COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN FISH AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM

Information on Proposal Development and ISRP Review

October 19, 2005

INTRODUCTION

This information is provided to assist and guide individuals or groups preparing project proposals for funding consideration under the FWP for Fiscal Years 2007- 2009. It was prepared by the Independent Scientific Review Panel for use by both project sponsors and proposal reviewers in the Columbia River Fish and Wildlife Program (FWP). All project proposals submitted for consideration must prepare a formal proposal according to these guidelines.

What is a Project Proposal?

A project proposal is a formal description of the work an individual or group (project sponsor) would like to conduct to meet certain articulated objectives of the Fish and Wildlife Program. This description includes responding to Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) responsibilities under the National Marine Fisheries Service or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Act biological opinions. Proposed projects need to be consistent with the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and address needs identified in subbasin plans adopted by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (Council). The subbasin plans are intended to provide a subbasin-scale context for project proposals. Some proposals may have a broader context relating to basinwide issues or those that transcend any single subbasin. In these cases it remains critical proposals demonstrate their relationship to the adopted Program (which includes the 2003 Mainstem Amendments).

The subbasin plans are available on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's website: www.subbasins.org. Compact discs of these documents are also available upon request from the Council. The [2000 Program](#) and [2003 Mainstem Amendments](#) are also available on the Council's website.

A project proposal contains information such as the Fish and Wildlife Program objectives being addressed, the nature of the proposed work, methods to be used, the relationships to related work, the qualifications of the individuals and organization to do the work, and costs, all of which are presented in a standard format. The proposal must be sufficiently complete so that competing proposals can be evaluated by independent scientists, local prioritization groups, the Council, and the public. The formal written proposal is the administrative record of project plans, the substantive background for the Bonneville Power Administration's Statement of Work and contract, and a basis for subsequent performance reviews of the project.

A proposal communicates to reviewers and decision-makers all the information necessary for them to understand what is being proposed and how it fits in relation to needs for information or action and its relation to other work. Project sponsors are responsible for coherent presentation and justification. This includes planning and coordination among cooperating entities as well as synthesis of previous work and information.

A proposal justifies why a funding agency should allocate money to this project and to the proposing individual or team. The proposal has to make the case for how this work fits into the larger body of the program, why this is the best approach to the program objectives addressed, and what public benefit will be achieved by funding it. It also needs to show why this is the most appropriate individual or group of people to entrust with the project.

A proposal synthesizes information related to the work. Project sponsors are encouraged to think about the specific questions or actions and how best to present them to people outside their field of specialization. The history of previous research or management actions that logically lead up to the proposed work should be explained clearly. Annual proposals for continuing projects are important bases for monitoring progress, up-dating objectives, and for projecting future budgets. For this review, full and up-dated proposals must be submitted for ongoing and new projects.

The content of all project proposals will be kept confidential by the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA, who manages the online proposal form) until the deadline for submitting proposals has passed. At that time, copies of the proposals will be made public and will be posted at www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2007, distributed to reviewers, and made available upon request to interested persons. In the event that a project sponsor wishes to protect intellectual property rights contained in a proposal, the project sponsor is free to copyright the proposal or take other appropriate legal steps consistent with this review process. It should be noted, however, that a log identifying proposals received, by title and by sponsor, will be posted at the above link prior to the deadline to allow sponsors to ensure that their proposal has been received.

Who Submits a Proposal?

Submission for funding under the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program is open to all qualified individuals or groups. All project sponsors, regardless of whether the project is currently ongoing or would be a new project, must prepare a formal project proposal for evaluation. All types of projects, whether research, habitat improvement, engineering projects, or operation and maintenance should have clearly written objectives, plans for accomplishing those objectives, budgets, and means for reporting the results and outcomes.

While it is anticipated that most project proposals will come from sponsors who are seeking funding for themselves to carry out the proposed project, project proposals may also be submitted by sponsors who see a need for funding the proposed activity, but are not interested in carrying out the project themselves. In such instances the project

proposal should list the recommended qualifications for those persons who would ultimately be chosen to carry out the project rather than the sponsor's qualifications.

Why are Formal Proposals Part of the Fish and Wildlife Program?

The written proposal is the primary basis by which a project is recommended for continuation or initial funding. Review of projects for funding in the Fish and Wildlife Program is accomplished most fairly and effectively when there is a clear and uniform way to propose new or continuing work and a uniformly applied evaluation and recommendation procedure. A primary objective of formal proposals and their review is to attain and maintain a high level of technical quality in the Fish and Wildlife Program. Another objective is to ensure that projects selected for funding demonstrate that Bonneville Power Administration funds are used wisely and efficiently to meet the program's goals. There is a continuing need for thorough evaluation of the benefits of all prospective new projects and all existing projects proposed to continue, particularly in light of funding constraints and the large number of worthy projects that might be supported.

A stated general goal of the federal government is to significantly enhance the use of peer review in selection of projects for federal funding. For projects funded through Bonneville Power Administration's fish and wildlife budget, the 1996 Amendment to the Northwest Power Act specifically states that projects shall be peer reviewed for consistency with the Council's program, be based on sound science principles, benefit fish and wildlife, have clearly defined objectives and planned outcomes, and include provisions for monitoring and evaluation of results. The proposals are the project-specific documents that are reviewed by the Independent Scientific Review Panel and its Peer Review Groups mandated by the Northwest Power Act.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

What Information Should a Project Proposal Contain?

Project sponsors are able to provide necessary information most effectively when they know the type of information that is desired and the form in which it is preferred. Similarly, proposal reviewers can most efficiently evaluate proposals when all information is in a predictable location. Thus, Bonneville and the cooperating agencies have established a standard format for proposals. Instructions to the form are attached to these guidelines and review criteria. The form is available through www.nwcouncil.org/fw/budget/2007.

The form is in 10 sections; sections 1 through 9 are to be completed online (as web forms), and section 10 (narrative) is a downloadable Microsoft Word form. Before writing a proposal, project sponsors should download the form and instructions for section 10, and review what information is being requested for all sections. By working on the narrative section and other online sections concurrently, project sponsors should be able to create a proposal that serves as a cohesive communications tool, a persuasive justification for the work, a coherent synthesis of relevant information, and a statement of

qualifications of the project sponsor. Reviewers will evaluate hard copies of proposals, and will expect to see a logical and thorough presentation of the case for supporting the proposed work.

Independent Scientific Review Panel Proposal Review Criteria

The 1996 Amendment to the Northwest Power Act provides criteria that form the basis of the ISRP review criteria. The amendment states that the ISRP's project recommendations be based on a determination that projects:

1. *are based on sound science principles;*
2. *benefit fish and wildlife;*
3. *have clearly defined objectives and outcomes;*
4. *with provisions for monitoring and evaluation of results.*

The ISRP's review criteria, attached below, further define and link these amendment criteria to the proposal form. This linkage allows the reviewers to read the proposal and determine to what extent the criteria are met in each section. **Project sponsors should use the ISRP criteria as a checklist to ensure that their proposal addresses all the criteria and, if not, to describe why a particular criterion does not apply.**

The ISRP criteria apply to all kinds of projects from operation and maintenance of a hatchery to habitat acquisition to gamete preservation research. Some individual projects include several unique strategies.

The ISRP's preliminary and final reports will provide written recommendations and comments reflecting the consensus of the ISRP on each proposal that is amenable to scientific review. The ISRP will not make publicly available individual reviewer comments or scores based on the ISRP criteria. These scores are used solely for internal ISRP deliberations.

Who are the ISRP reviewers?

ISRP and Peer Review Group members are appointed by the Council, have demonstrated expertise in fish and wildlife biology relevant to the Columbia River, and meet the National Research Council standards for independence and conflict of interest. A review team of three or more professional peers from the ISRP and Peer Review Group will review each proposal. The ISRP will select these review teams on the basis of technical knowledge and experience relevant to the proposal(s). Teams will be chaired by a technical leader with expertise most relevant to the proposal. For background information on the ISRP visit the Council's website at www.nwcouncil.org/fw/isrp.

ISRP Proposal Review Criteria

1. Technical and Scientific Background

Is there an identified problem related to fish and wildlife in the Basin? Does the proposal adequately explain (with references) the technical background and logical need to address the problem to benefit fish or wildlife? (0=no explanation; 1=poorly defined problem; 5= adequately defined problem; 10=highly persuasive, clearly defined problem)

SCORE (0-10) _____

2. Rationale and Significance to Subbasin Plans and Regional Programs

Does the proposal demonstrate a clear relationship to specific objectives of the subbasin plan and specific parts of the Fish and Wildlife Program, and as relevant, NMFS or USFWS Biological Opinions or other plans? (0=no explanation; 1=poorly defined problem, not associated with Programs, 5= some demonstrated significance to subbasin and regional plan; 10=well associated with a high priority in a subbasin and regional plan.)

SCORE (0-10) _____

3. Relationships to Other Projects

Does the proposal put the work into the context of other work funded in the FWP and described in the subbasin plan inventory section? Does this proposal include collaborative efforts with similar projects, even if not part of an overall joint plan? If this proposal is intended as an integrated component of a set of studies, is the rationale for that set and any time sequencing explained and documented? (0=no effort to document or collaborate, 5=minimal linkage or rationale, 10=strong collaborative effort with logical allocation of effort and linkages described, or full rationale why linkages are not appropriate).

SCORE (0-10) _____

4. Project History (for ongoing projects)

Is the history of the project adequately described, including the original need for the project? Does the proposal demonstrate that past actions have resulted in achieving project objectives? Has there been adequate monitoring of project effectiveness? Are these results described in biologically measurable terms and if not does the proposal describe why not and provide other results (e.g. peer reviewed articles)? Does the project describe the adaptive management implications from past results whether successes or failures? Is the continued need for the work justified? Are methods and procedures for collection of past monitoring data (i.e., meta-data) adequately described? Are past results (data, analysis, etc.) adequately communicated or distributed for benefit of the region? (0=no effort to document results; 1=minimal effort to document what appear to be poor results with no description of management implications; 5=some effort to document results, management implications, and some potential for benefits; 10=strong reporting and evaluation of results which have guided project direction with demonstrated or a strong potential for benefits to fish and wildlife.)

NEW PROJECT (SECTION NOT APPLICABLE) _____

SCORE (0-10) _____

5. Proposal Objectives, Tasks, and Methods

A. Objectives

Does the proposal have clearly defined and measurable objectives (whenever possible in terms of measurable benefits to fish and wildlife) with specific timelines? Are the objectives tied to those in the subbasin plans and FWP? (0=no explanation; 1=poorly explained with poor match to subbasin objectives, explained as tasks where could be in biologically measurable terms; 5=adequately explained in terms of measurable benefits to fish and wildlife with match to subbasin objectives and with timelines; 10=clearly explained with close match to subbasin objectives and when possible stated in biologically measurable terms with specific timelines.)

SCORE (0-10) _____

B. Methods (Work Elements)

Are the methods adequately described and appropriate, i.e., based on sound scientific principles? Does the project employ the best available scientific information and techniques? Is the project or experimental design reasonable and defensible in techniques and resources? (0=no explanation or scientifically unsound; 1=poorly explained or poor techniques; 5=adequately explained, sound techniques; 10=clearly explained with best available, or even innovative, scientific information and techniques)

SCORE (0-10) _____

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

Does the proposal include provisions for monitoring and evaluation of results (in the context of the objectives) that apply at the project level (whether the M&E is provided in this proposal or a directly related project)? (0=no explanation; 1=poorly explained, will not allow for determination if the project met its objectives; 5=adequately explained and will allow for determination if project met its objectives; 10=clearly explained, will allow for determination of success or failure of the project, inform adaptive management decisions, and be applicable to other efforts).

SCORE (0-10) _____

6. Facilities, Equipment, and Personnel

Are the facilities and personnel appropriate to achieve the objectives and timeframe milestones? (0=no explanation; 1=poorly described or inadequate; 3=reasonable; 5=exceptionally unique personnel and facilities for the work)

SCORE (0-5) _____

Information Transfer

Does the proposal include explicit plans for how the information, technology, etc. from this project will be disseminated and used? Are methods and procedures for collection of monitoring data (i.e., meta-data) adequately described? Are plans for release and long-term storage of data and meta-data adequate? (0=no explanation; 1=poorly explained and inadequate dissemination given the importance of the information generated; 3=adequate plan for the information generated; 5=excellent plan for the information generated, e.g. included in usable format on regional website, peer review journal)

SCORE (0-5) _____

Benefit to Fish and Wildlife (Proposal as a whole)

Will the proposed project benefit focal species/indicator populations, as an individual project or as a critical link in a set of projects? Will the benefits persist over the long-term and not be compromised by other activities in the basin? (0=no benefit; 5=likely benefits but short-term; 10=some benefits that will persist; 15=demonstrated significant benefits that will persist over the long-term)

SCORE (0-15) _____

Will the project effect other non-focal species? Does the project demonstrate that all "reasonable" precautions have been taken, based on the best available science, to not adversely affect habitat/populations of native biota? (-10=adverse effect and precautions not taken; 0= no adverse effect; or potential adverse effects and adequate precautions proposed; 5=demonstrated benefits to non-focal species, habitat, populations.)

SCORE (-10 to 5) _____

TOTAL SCORE: Existing Project _____ of 100 New Project _____ of 90

Consistency with Power Act Amendment Criteria:

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1) SOUND SCIENCE PRINCIPLES (all proposal) | (YES/NO) _____ |
| 2) CONSISTENT WITH PROGRAM (criterion 2) | (YES/NO) _____ |
| 3) BENEFIT TO FISH AND WILDLIFE (all proposal) | (YES/NO) _____ |
| 4) CLEARLY DEFINED OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME (criterion 5a) | (YES/NO) _____ |
| 5) PROVISION FOR M&E OF RESULTS (criterion 5c) | (YES/NO) _____ |