

12/13/2005

Mr. Steve Crowe  
Executive Director  
NW Power and Conservation Council  
851 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Portland, Or 97204

Dear Mr. Crowe,

I am writing to offer comments on the Council's deliberations concerning the Fish Passage Center and I ask that these comments be made part of the official record for this issue.

I served as the Executive Director of the Columbia Fish and Wildlife Authority for three years ending in July 2005. Among my assigned duties was the supervision of the Director of the FPC and consequently am very familiar with the history and circumstances leading up to the present controversy. During that time the Council created the Fish Passage Center Oversight Board and I was present at all of the meetings held during my tenure. We took the recommendations of the Oversight Board very seriously and implemented their recommendations as they were developed. The Board reviewed work plans and budgets and recommended greater availability of the products to the public. All memos and analyses were posted on the web site as they were developed and greater public outreach would have been possible if greater budgets would have been available.

It has been alleged that the FPC produces biased science and the review by the Board did not substantiate that claim. Also during my time as supervisor I did not receive any substantial complaint with documentation of such biased work. If the work were biased I would have intervened.

It seems to me that the issue traces back to the use of the FPC results by its clients who have a legitimate role in advocacy for the fish resources. The services of the FPC were available to anyone but they were seldom asked to do any analysis by the current set of detractors who claim bias. This was particularly true during the summer spill controversy when I observed poor analysis being supported by the utility industry that was poorly founded and without peer review. The agencies and tribes uniformly were satisfied with the services of the FPC and played an active role in determining what was done by the center in response to their requests. I also observed that once the results of various analyses were posted on the web site many organizations would use or reference them. Such use is beyond the control of the FPC and in my view that use was encouraged by the direction of the Board.

In summary the staff of the FPC followed the direction and the rules established by the Oversight Board and are now facing elimination. It seems grossly unfair and

disrespectful to have this happen to one of the best and most useful components of the Council's program. All review and oversight of the FPC by the Independent Science Review Panel and by the Independent Science Review Board have found little fault with their protocols and practices yet regional spokesmen continue to allege bias and poor practices. The real truth is more obviously an attempt to break up a vital support service for the Agencies and Tribes. As you try to develop a replacement structure for the FPC you will find that it is not about the staff but about the questions that are asked and the analyses produced to answer the key questions. I assume you will still offer this technical support in some fashion and it will continue to be controversial since no amount of science no matter how well done will prevent the continuation of what is essentially a political conflict. The Council has failed miserably in its assignment to provide leadership to resolve such conflicts and as you deliberate on the future conflict resolution needs to be a vital part of future process.

My last comment concerns the future of the staff of the FPC. I found all of the staff to be very hard working and professional people. They have been caught in the crusher of political backlash not of their doing and do not deserve to lose their jobs. Their families deserve honorable treatment as this progresses and it would unconscionable to put these people out on the street with no safety net. I urge the Council leadership to insist that these people are well treated in the transition.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Yours truly,

Rodney W. Sando  
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