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October 26, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Regional Coordinating Group

FROM: Council Staff

SUBJECT: Subbasin Planning - Regional Issues

In August 2004, the Council conducted a review of all 59 subbasin plans and comments received on the plans against the standards on the NW Power Act and the 2000 Fish and Wildlife Program (Program) to determine each plans adoptability into the Program. The review revealed several issues or deficiencies that were found to exist across all subbasin plans to some extent. Staff then developed a paper describing these issues and proposed treatments for each. Some of the treatments resulted in additional work on the plans under new contracts. Other proposed treatments involved more work at a larger scale -- issues that should be addressed on a regional level in the near future. This discussion will focus on the additional work needed at the regional level -- in particular on artificial production and research, monitoring and evaluation.

- **Artificial production strategy integration.** Artificial production strategies in or affecting the subbasin but not sufficiently defined, or not integrated with other elements of the subbasin plan.

- **Monitoring and evaluation.** Inadequate or incomplete provisions for monitoring and evaluation.

Artificial production strategy

The comments and staff review indicate that many of the plans failed to account for artificial production in and affecting their subbasins as completely as anticipated by the Program and the Technical Guide. Many plans that include artificial production strategies did not fully describe how that strategy was integrated with habitat related strategies to meet integrated biological objectives for a focal species. Similarly, often plans did not clearly describe the artificial production strategy within the ecological context of the subbasin.

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There are a number of reasons that the planners were unable to complete this work, the least of which is not the lack of information forthcoming from federal recovery planning and hatchery-planning processes as expected. There are also ongoing legal proceedings where these issues are being discussed, and in some cases, planners decided that the decisions in those proceedings needed to be made before further detail could be put into plans.

The Council proposes that the primary treatment for this problem flow from the Artificial Production Review and Evaluation (APRE) and related initiatives outside of subbasin planning, as described below. Improvements will be integrated back into the subbasin plans at a later date. There are limited exceptions to this recommendation where we do believe additional planning work in the response period could be made in conjunction with other improvements. For artificial production activities to be adequately addressed in subbasin plans:

- Hatchery production must be aligned with natural fish production, existing subbasin habitat and future habitat restoration efforts.
- Hatchery production should be integrated with natural fish production with the aim of lessening negative ecological interactions and mixed-stock harvest impacts.
- Subbasin plans should clearly articulate measurable objectives for hatchery escapement, natural returns and harvest needs.

The Council suggests that the APRE process may be the best vehicle to make advancements on these questions, rather than returning to the subbasin planning groups that struggled with this component. Future APRE work will assist subbasin planning by better integrating artificial production with local conditions. As part of a process to clarify basinwide artificial production objectives, we anticipate that the APRE process will include a series of provincial meetings with hatchery operators and harvest managers to clarify harvest and production objectives. In those meetings, we will work with the assessment information from subbasin plans and production, harvest and recovery goals described in other plans, to attempt to ensure that hatchery production, habitat conditions and restoration efforts, and natural population status is accounted for and integrated. In general, participants in the APRE exercise will be supplied the information on habitat conditions, hatchery restoration/protection strategies, and natural population status from subbasin plans and be asked to determine the appropriate role hatchery production in the subbasin.

From the APRE activities described above we will move next to attempt to articulate numeric objectives for hatchery returns, natural escapement and harvest needs in and out of the subbasin. These numeric subbasin objectives can then be aggregated into provincial objectives and provincial objectives into basinwide objectives. The products from these workshops will likely inform future iterations of subbasin plans.

The APRE will work with NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to coordinate with ongoing NEPA and ESA processes. While much of the basin's hatchery production should be better incorporated into subbasin activities, it may not be possible to resolve all hatchery production issues due to existing mitigation or legal agreements. If conflicts exist, they will be noted and discussed in other venues.

Research, Monitoring and Evaluation
The ISRP found that adequate RME sections were lacking in nearly all subbasin plans. A key challenge is how to evaluate resource management efforts at different scales in a way that is scientifically defensible and ecologically meaningful e.g., how to link monitoring efforts at the watershed or subbasin scale with efforts at the larger scale of evolutionarily significant units.

Council Recommendation: To address RME needs for the Columbia River Basin in any practical sense requires a shift from work at the project scale to a programmatic approach. Individual subbasin cannot be expected to have or hire the specialized expertise, secure long range funding commitments, or command the ability to mount and sustain long-term RME efforts. Yet because the issues of interest to subbasin planners in RME are also of interest to entities with responsibilities over a broader geographic scale, it is possible for efforts at the smaller scale to benefit from the overlay of efforts at a broader scale. Therefore, rather than try to design a complete and comprehensive monitoring program in each subbasin, which it probably cannot afford, the region should identify and develop consensus about how much and what type of monitoring is needed and can be afforded for managing an effective Fish and Wildlife program. Further, all opportunities to conduct collaborative research should be fully exercised.

The Council support the efforts of the Pacific Northwest Aquatic monitoring Program (PNAMP) to develop a regional approach to monitoring. PNAMP is a voluntary, non-directive, self-organizing forum committed to developing a unified approach to monitoring in the Pacific Northwest. PNAMP provides a forum for collaboration of the members as they work towards developing a coordinated approach to monitoring by providing a durable structure for facilitating the development of cross-party linkages. Ratification by PNAMP of products that will encourage continuity in disparate monitoring efforts is a key objective. Professional courtesy and respect for overlapping but different mandates is an essential ingredient for the successful negotiation of a regional approach to monitoring in the Pacific Northwest.

At the request of the Council, PNAMP previously developed guidance to help subbasin planners design the monitoring elements of the subbasin plans. The guidance document provided general and some specific considerations to the Council and subbasin planners on how their monitoring can fit within the broad range of monitoring activities in the Pacific Northwest. PNAMP offered this initial guidance for monitoring efforts at the subbasin level as a step to encourage the coordination of local, tribal, state and federal programs.

In regards to funding through a future project selection process, Council staff has communicated to PNAMP that the Council will likely prioritize monitoring work at a programmatic scale that will have clear benefits to the Fish and Wildlife Program in general and subbasin planning in particular. In conclusion, the area of RME presents the Council with a clear opportunity to provide leadership to the region on issues that are central to the success of the Fish and Wildlife Program.

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