

CrcLmbks
SW
PB
RM
SC
JS

Coles, Kendra

From: Walker, Mark
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2006 12:58 PM
To: Coles, Kendra; Marker, Doug; Waste, Steve
Subject: FW: Comment on document 2006-7

20060629

-----Original Message-----
From: Baugh, Zenobia
Sent: Friday, June 23, 2006 3:28 PM
To: Walker, Mark
Subject: FW: Comment on document 2006-7

-----Original Message-----
From: Bruce Schmidt [mailto:b_r_schmidt@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, June 23, 2006 3:27 PM
To: Baugh, Zenobia
Subject: Comment on document 2006-7

Mark Walker:

In earlier comments directly to Dr. Karier prior to the request for comments, I provided suggestions that I hoped would be helpful in further development of the "data center" concept. Now that a more formal comment period is open, I would like to offer several more specific recommendations.

The proposal made reference to two kinds of functions: one related to data gaps, new data collection and data collection standards/protocols (sampling) and the other related to evaluating existing data, data dissemination and data reporting protocols (data management). These functions must be addressed by different kinds of expertise (biologists/monitoring practitioners in the first instance, data management specialists in the second). There are already several collaborative efforts that are working to improve both of these aspects of data availability. The Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP) and the Collaborative Systemwide Monitoring and Evaluation Project (CSMEP) are focused on coordinating monitoring (including determining data gaps, needed new sampling, and determining appropriate field sampling protocols). PNAMP and CSMEP are coordinating, with CSMEP focused specifically on Salmonid population monitoring. The Northwest Environmental Data-network (NED) is focused on approaches, procedures and standards for disseminating data on a broad basis. These are

JUN 23 2006

essentially the same groups of functions envisioned under the data center proposal.

If these groups are already addressing the same issues raised in the proposal, then what is missing that is preventing the needs from being met? I would suggest that there are several elements missing that could be addressed through Council action:

1. Coordination. The two kinds of functions are essentially two sides of the same coin. Both aspects are necessary in order to have a seamless flow of data from local collection and local use out to broader regional scale availability and use. These projects (PNAMP, CSMEP and NED) currently strive to work together, but all would benefit from a more formal statement of the relationships and specific goals and objectives from the regional perspective. Those goals and objectives should be developed in a collaborative manner and then formalized through a regional entity such as the Council.

2. Commitment. The efforts listed above are all voluntary collaborations, with relatively little direct support or authoritative mandate. Work is accomplished only as the individual cooperating members have time to conduct work for the groups beyond their normal jobs. These efforts should be provided with a small amount of consistent funding to provide specific needed expertise that would serve the collaborative missions. The participating agencies should be asked to provide more formalized contributions of staff time to support these efforts.

3. Authority. The agencies that perform most of the monitoring/sampling/data collection are independent, with no one entity "in charge". Thus, the collaborative approach is the only effective way to meet the needs identified in the proposal. The Council could use its region-wide scope and actively encourage all agencies that participate in the Fish and Wildlife Program to also participate in NED and PNAMP. The agencies in CSMEP should also be encouraged to participate in PNAMP because it is intended to be an ongoing collaborative process, while CSMEP is a specific contracted project. The Council could request that BPA include language in its contracts with FWP participants that all data be provided in exchangeable format with metadata (by the entity itself or through an intermediary database project), but with the understanding that the need for data sharing goes far beyond the amount of data captured through FWP funded projects.

4. Capability. Widespread sharing of data essentially requires that the data be available over the Internet, yet many agencies/offices lack

comprehensive data systems and/or the capability of posting data on the web in relational databases.

Several solutions are available:

a. Continue (consider expanding) the existing intermediary database projects that obtain data from multiple sources, standardize them across agency lines, add georeferencing, and make them available over the Internet. These projects (like StreamNet, PITAGIS, RMIS) serve the function of posting data to the web for the agencies that are currently not mandated or funded to do so. This kind of intermediary service will be required until all participating agencies are fully willing and able to do so themselves. Projects like StreamNet are also working with their partner agencies to encourage and assist in developing internal database capability that in the future would provide them with the capability of posting data to the web themselves if they choose to do so. Regional guidance on the priority data that need to be made available through this approach would be very useful.

b. Increase support to the state and tribal agencies that generate much of the monitoring data to support the development of data management infrastructure within the agencies. There is increasing interest in utilizing Distributed Database Management System (DDBMS) technology to enable data to be pulled directly from agency databases over the Internet. This will be essential if the agencies would like to begin serving their data directly instead of through intermediary database projects. This will be costly, however, as it will require hardware, software and additional data management expertise within each of the agencies involved. It would require that the agencies add regional data dissemination to their agency mandates and priorities.

And, it would require that the agencies adopt specific sampling and data definition protocols so that the data originating in the different agencies are equivalent and can be shared seamlessly. This is would be a significant challenge for the agencies if they choose to do so, and would likely have to take place gradually.

In conclusion, I believe that the goals of the data center proposal are appropriate. It is not clear, however, that a new structure like a specific Data Center is needed to meet these goals. Instead, I would recommend that existing organizations be focused and mandated to address these needs. I believe that could be achieved at a lower cost than through developing a new regional entity.

These comments are mine, personally, and have not been reviewed or approved through my employer or my

steering committee.

Sincerely,

Bruce Schmidt

Do You Yahoo!?

Tired of spam? Yahoo! Mail has the best spam protection around
<http://mail.yahoo.com>