

**Columbia River Regional Forum
SYSTEM CONFIGURATION TEAM
November 21, 2014
Final Minutes**

1. Introduction and Review of Meeting Minutes

Today's SCT meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin, NOAA Fisheries. Representatives of NOAA, the COE, BPA, Idaho, USFWS, Yakama Tribe, CRITFC and others participated. Copies of previous minutes, documents mentioned, and meeting sign-up sheets are available from Kathy Ceballos at 503.230-5420 or Bill Hevlin at 503-230-5415. Draft and final SCT notes are available on the COE's TMT website under the FPOM link. The draft October 16 minutes are out for comments for another week, then they will be finalized.

2. Review of CRFM FY15 Ranking Spreadsheet

Today's discussion of CRFM funding priorities focused on recent adjustments to the FY15 budget. Randy Chong, COE, distributed copies of two spreadsheets, a prioritized version and one showing all scores to date. People who haven't given scores to the COE yet were urged to do so.

The biggest change in FY15 funding is that Ice Harbor performance verification monitoring (line item 5) is being deferred until FY16, which brings the FY15 total down to \$68 million. This means everything on the spreadsheet can be funded if the President's budget is approved by Congress. It also leaves \$3 million in additional funds to be spent in FY15.

Today SCT began considering potential projects to move forward for FY15 funding. The following candidates were proposed:

- Adult PIT tag detection at John Day (line item 37)
- PIT tag detection in the ice and trash sluiceways at BON and TDA
- A synthesis report on steelhead fallback and kelt straying at MCN
- A steelhead workshop

Congress hopefully will pass an omnibus bill that includes authorization for the COE to proceed with estuary research funding (line item 4, \$800,000), Chong said. There was conversation about how to proceed with estuary work in light of BiOp requirements and the COE's lack of funding authority. Trevor Conder, NOAA, asked whether BPA could fund some of the estuary study costs, and Julie Doumbia, BPA, said that's unlikely because of the way the MOA was set up. Regardless of Congressional action, the BiOp requires estuary work, Gary Fredricks, NOAA, pointed out.

SCT discussed how the FY15 budget is currently allocated, with \$2 million specifically set aside for lamprey, \$10 million for the Willamette River, and \$59 million for the FCRPS for a total of \$71 million. Depending on how Congress proceeds with budget approval, the COE may or may not be authorized to move funds among the three categories or spend more than \$2 million on lamprey recovery.

Discussion turned to individual line items:

- 5. Ice Harbor performance verification monitoring, \$150,000 – The estimate was revised downward from \$9 million because testing is being deferred to FY16 in an effort to reach consensus on one spill treatment. If the COE becomes confident that a one-treatment test is feasible in FY16, money may be spent in FY15 to prepare for the test, such as buying tags. See agenda item 5 below for extended discussion of this line item.
- 28. Turbine passage survival program, \$400,000 – Based on information given in today's presentation (see agenda item 3), NOAA changed its score from 3 to 5.
- 30. Transportation COP, \$50,000; and 30A. Project COP completions and updates, \$35,000 – In response to a request from Idaho, the COPs have been split into two items so they can be ranked separately.
- 37. Adult PIT detection installation at John Day, \$20,000 – This was suggested as a candidate for supplemental FY15 funds being released by the delay of performance testing at Ice Harbor, which would raise the FY15 estimate from \$20,000. The COE has yet to hear sufficient justification in support of the need for adult PIT detection at JDA, and asked that NOAA and BPA provide that justification. FFDRWG will discuss this item in depth at its next meeting, as well as PIT detection in the ice and trash sluiceways at BON 1st powerhouse and TDA. Christine Peterson, BPA, suggested combining the JDA PIT detection installation with the contract for development of new PIT tagging technology. SCT scored line item 37 today: NOAA – 5, Idaho – 5, BPA – defer, USFWS – 5, CRITFC/Umatilla – 4, Yakama – 4, COE – defer for cost justification.

3. Turbine Survival Program Work Plan for FY15

Martin Ahmann, COE, and George Medina, COE Portland, gave a presentation on the scope of work for the turbine survival program in FY15 (line item 28). Further investigation of the B2 model is a top priority. Erroneous cam curve data from the ERDC studies interfered with the plan to produce a final report on fish survival when the BON 1st powerhouse is operating at 1% efficiency. The COE also intends to do biological testing. Until there are good data on the cam curves, the COE is advocating a minimal level of funding.

Meanwhile, it's important to keep the TSP team intact so they can address issues as they come up, such as the fixed blade status of ICR unit 3. Recently the DOE

established a hydro system turbine program to fund development of environmentally friendly turbines. Keeping the TSP study team intact will allow the region to leverage the DOE expertise and study findings. There's also a need for TSP to help develop a long term strategy for FCRPS turbine replacements.

All of these factors make it vital to fund completion of the ERDC B2 model but that is not currently planned for FY15. Fredricks estimated funding for the B2 modeling effort at \$210,000-232,000.

Ahmann said funding for the TSP will be about \$630,000, not \$400,000 as listed on the current spreadsheet. The \$630,000 does not include B2 modeling support, which will cost an additional \$15,000. Some SCT members questioned whether actual costs will be that high. Hevlin pointed out the TSP is paying off now in unforeseen ways. Over the years the TSP has been funded by DOE as a broader effort than CRFM, Ahmann said.

4. Adult Migration Studies for FY15

The first bit of information for 2014 is available, Gary Fredricks, NOAA, reported. There was general consensus that the next step on this topic is to review existing studies.

5. Update on Ice Harbor Juvenile Survival Performance Study

Derek Fryer, COE Walla Walla, led a discussion. The COE is investigating whether there would be cost savings in testing Ice Harbor and Lower Granite at the same time, now that Ice Harbor is being delayed. So they've prepared a one-pager evaluating study assumptions for combined LGR/ICR dam performance evaluation testing. Among the issues discussed today were downstream survival assumptions, tag battery life, sample sizes, and downstream array locations. The objective is to estimate survival at multiple downstream detection arrays.

Early preparation for the LGR performance test, which is not listed on the FY15 spreadsheet, may be a good candidate for some of the \$3 million in extra funds, Hevlin suggested. Purchasing tags in FY15 is another possible use of FY15 money, but tag battery life comes into play. A study proposal will be drafted that addresses the issues with a multiple-project test such as Granite and Ice Harbor combined. Conder suggested using older study results rather than re-tagging fish, and there was a discussion of injectable tags.

It could take until FY17 to prepare for a combined performance test at both dams, Chong cautioned. There was general agreement the spill treatment decision will have to go to RIOG, probably not before January 2015.

6. Update on Construction of Don Edwards Tern Island

David Trachtenbarg, COE, reported. The contract has been awarded for construction of Don Edwards tern island at the wildlife refuge in San Francisco. Construction is scheduled to begin on Monday, November 24. The island should be finished and ready to provide an alternate home for nesting terns by the end of January 2015. The contractor doesn't plan to use helicopters and will float semi semi-trucks to the site on barges. The parallel effort to dissuade terns from nesting on Crescent, Goose and East Sand islands in the Columbia estuary is proceeding on track.

7. FFDRWG Discussion of 2015 Plans for Lower Granite Ladder and Trap Cooling Improvements

There was general agreement that this agenda item was adequately addressed during yesterday's FFDRWG meeting. The Corps has decided to wait until the 2015-2016 winter in-water work window to install the diffuser 14 chimney and extend the intake depth on the forebay pumps. For cooling the ladder and trap this coming summer, the Corps will once again rely on the forebay pumps and the rented submersible pumps.

8. Upcoming Meeting Dates (FFDRWG/SRWG)

- December 4 or 9 – Portland FFDRWG
- December 10-11 – AFEP review
- February 26 – Walla Walla FFDRWG

9. Next SCT Meeting

The next SCT meeting will be held on January 15 in Portland. These notes prepared by technical writer Pat Vivian.

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