

Columbia River Regional Forum
SYSTEM CONFIGURATION TEAM
January 15, 2015
Final Meeting Notes

Today's SCT meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin, NOAA Fisheries. Representatives of NOAA, BPA, USFWS, Oregon, Yakama Tribe, COE, NPCC, Idaho, CRITFC/Umatilla Tribe and others participated. Copies of previous minutes, documents discussed, 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. Comments are due on the draft minutes for November 21; there was no SCT meeting in December.

1. Review of FY15 CRFM Ranking Spreadsheet

Randy Chong, COE, gave an update on the FY15 budget for CRFM mitigation efforts. Since SCT met last November, the omnibus bill was signed into law, authorizing \$71 million to fund mitigation on the Columbia and Snake rivers, the Willamette River, and Pacific lamprey recovery. Because Congress made no distinctions between the three categories, the COE will operate under the assumption that funds can be moved from one category to another as needed.

Another positive development since the November SCT meeting is that Congress raised the ceiling on COE authority to fund estuary studies from \$25 million to \$45 million. This means line items 22 and 25 on the FY15 scoring spreadsheet can move forward. SCT had previously deferred scoring these two line items and didn't score them today because Congressional action means the budget is sufficient to fund everything on the spreadsheet.

At the last meeting, SCT members learned the Ice Harbor Dam performance test scheduled for FY15 is being deferred to FY16 due to lack of regional consensus on whether to test one spill treatment or two. So the estimated cost of \$9 million for two treatments at Ice Harbor is now freed up for other work in FY15. One of SCT's goals today was to consider ways of advising the COE to make use of the funds remaining. The current total for all items on the FY15 spreadsheet, including CRFM, the Willamette River, and lamprey mitigation, is \$69 million. This leaves another \$2 million in funds to spend on accelerating other projects.

Bob Rose, Yakama, asked whether there will be an opportunity to support additional lamprey work in 2015 beyond the \$2 million budget. Chong said the COE has already allocated an extra \$350,000, gleaned from savings on an existing contract, for lamprey mitigation projects. This brings the total to \$2.35 million for lamprey work in FY15. A potential project for acceleration is JLAT tag development, which the lamprey team has identified as a high priority. It's important not to make hasty decisions, and to assure that funding options are chosen carefully in terms of effects on lamprey, Rose said. There was agreement that JLAT tag development is a worthy candidate for this funding. Chong said he will know in a couple months whether this effort can move forward with enough time for the contracting process.

Chong distributed two versions of today's spreadsheet, a ranked version and one showing individual scores. SCT members used the scoring spreadsheet as reference for today's line item

discussion. Since the last SCT meeting, USFWS has provided scores to the COE, which changed the ranked order of the projects. Discussion focused on line items that have changed since the November SCT meeting:

- Line 3. Avian predation, 4.5 million
- Line 4. Estuary habitat studies, \$800,000 – Now that Congress has raised the ceiling on the COE’s authority to fund estuary studies from \$25 million to nearly \$45 million, SCT would typically need to rank line items 3 and 4. However, they are already part of the total FY15 CRFM budget estimate of \$69 million, meaning everything on the spreadsheet can still be funded with their inclusion.
- Line 18. LGR adult ladder temperature interim measures, \$1.4 million – Because USFWS has concern about entrainment of bull trout into the proposed deeper water intake in the LGR forebay, this project could go to formal consultation, which would delay ladder improvements by at least 6 months. It was noted that deferring this project to winter 2017 would coincide with the outage of Dworshak unit 3, with negative consequences on summer augmentation flows. Delay could also cause the project to collide with the Lower Granite unit 1 outage. Electrical barriers or fish screens might adequately protect sub-adult bull trout of 14-16” length, Joe Skalisky, USFWS, said. Hevlin noted that it would not be wise to install intake screening at the deep intakes which could require lengthy shut down of the cool water supply for debris cleaning. Walla Walla FFDRWG will take up this issue at its next meeting in late February. Meanwhile, Tim Wik will set up a phone conference next week to discuss possible options for dealing with the bull trout concerns. Line 18 could be delayed and the funds released if no solution is found.
- Line 22. McNary performance verification monitoring, \$357,000
- Line 25. Lower river BiOp performance testing, \$1.88 million – Chong increased the estimates on lines 22 and 25 by \$275,000 to pay for follow-up data mining of route-specific information from performance testing. The goal of these line items is to investigate why McNary failed to meet its BiOp performance standard. Draft information comparing survival through the McNary powerhouse and spillway is expected for all stocks by April or May. The COE has data on survival rates at each unit.
- Line 37. John Day adult PIT AMIP, \$20,000 – There was discussion of whether to fund this line item. The COE needs a written justification for adult PIT detection in the John Day sluiceway, including how it’s tied to the BiOp. Trevor Conder and Gary Fredricks, NOAA, will write the justification.
- Line 40. Investigate study assumptions for use of downsized JSATs tag – This line item is one of four (#40-43) added to the spreadsheet after SCT identified them in November as potential candidates for accelerated funding. Line 40 will be combined with line 41 for an estimated cost of \$200,000-250,000 in the FY15 budget. The current tag size of 15 mm length and 3 mm diameter is designed to last for 25 days, but with recent

improvements in electronics the tags could last for more than 100 days, a major gain for monitoring efforts in the Columbia and Willamette basins. Recently the COE sent SCT members a one-pager that addresses two questions: Is there a difference in survival rates for fish tagged at LGR with an injectable tag? If not, should injectable tags be used for a multi-dam survival study? A multi-dam study could save about \$2 million in tag purchases – but the risk being weighed is a multi-million-dollar performance evaluation whose survival results could cost the region a lot of money.

- Line 41. Pilot study for use of downsized JSATs tag – This line item is the second of four added to the spreadsheet because they were suggested at the November SCT meeting as candidates for accelerated funding. Line 40 will be combined with line 41 for an estimated cost of \$200,000-250,000 in the FY15 budget. PNNL will charge \$200-210 per tag to manufacture the injectable tags. Further discussion of this line item will take place at this afternoon’s SRWG meeting.
- Line 42. Feasibility of PIT tag monitoring at Bonneville 1st powerhouse and The Dalles sluiceways – This is the third of four line items added to the spreadsheet after they were suggested at the November SCT meeting as candidates for accelerated funding. This item has no estimate yet; BPA expressed reservations about the potential cost. NOAA supports this work because more tag detections at BON will allow more detections lower in the river. Correcting the existing survival estimate ranges for the BON sluiceway and powerhouse is “low hanging fruit” and can be done with minimal expense.
- Line 43. Steelhead fallback synthesis report – This is the last of four line items added to the spreadsheet in response to the November SCT discussion. There is no estimate yet. Chong expressed confidence the COE would be able to complete the fallback synthesis report in FY15. The initial scope is to look at the issue of fallback and overwintering steelhead and kelts at McNary. More information on steelhead fallback would address Oregon’s request for better detection of steelhead fallback at The Dalles. Results from several studies, including those at other projects, could be used to help identify ways to improve survival at McNary. There was discussion of a winter spill study; SRWG will refine the scope of this line item. At the last SCT meeting, a steelhead workshop was suggested as a possibility for funding. It was noted that CRFM funds have not previously been spent on workshops.

2. Update on The Dalles Adult Fishway and AWS Project

Ian Chane, COE Portland, and Pat Duyck, project manager of the AWS at TDA, gave an overview. Currently at \$16 million, this is the most costly line item in the CRFM FY15 program budget. The estimate will be updated in February and will probably increase. Design is close to 90% review, and the COE plans to award the construction contract by August, which would allow the contractor to take advantage of the 2015-16 winter work window. Construction of the backup adult water supply to the ladder will take two winters. The COE is planning to limit the in-water work to winter so it will not interrupt fish passage operations. The original design called for a cofferdam to be in place for a full year, spanning two in-water work periods, but that would have been a problem during the spring freshet.

Duyck distributed copies of a handout with diagrams of the AWS design and a schedule of significant dates. The current design has the upstream structure holding the cofferdam and a solid gate, which will be replaced with trash racks during passage season. The diameter of the pipe will be 10.5 feet; the bore through the dam will be 11 feet diameter. Pre-cast blocks will be anchored into concrete in a process similar to construction of The Dalles spill wall. The design calls for removing these pre-cast blocks and using the trash rack slot to install a cofferdam for use during the winter in-water work period.

Once built, the AWS will be cycled and flushed yearly but not used unless both fish units go out of service during passage season, which happened last year for 48 hours. FFDRWG will discuss this project in greater detail at its February 5 meeting.

3. Upcoming FFDRWG/SRWG Meeting Dates

- February 5 – Portland FFDRWG
- February 26 – Walla Walla FFDRWG in Walla Walla

4. Next SCT Meeting

SCT will meet next on February 19 in the 10th floor conference room at NOAA's office in Portland. These notes prepared by technical writer Pat Vivian.

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