

Final Notes January 26, 1998

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

January 8, 1998, 9:00 a.m.-4 p.m.

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES
PORTLAND, OREGON

I. Greetings and Introductions.

The January meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Brian Brown of NMFS. The agenda for the January 8 meeting and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B. The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov.

II. Updates.

A. In-Season Management. Doug Arndt of COE began the in-season management update with a report on the January early-bird runoff forecast, noting that, at most projects in the system, forecast runoff volumes for the January-July period in 1998 are in the 75%-85%-of-normal range. I don't think these numbers will come as a big surprise to anyone, Arndt said; however, it is still very early in the season, and I don't think it's time to panic yet. Are there specific operations in place now, such as flood control, that are being driven by the early-bird forecast? Brown asked. I didn't ask that specific question, Arndt replied, but I think it's a little early to begin changing operations in response to this forecast. That will be discussed further at next week's TMT meeting, as they begin talking about the 1998 Water Management Plan.

B. Plan for Analyzing and Testing Hypotheses (PATH). As most of you are aware, PATH held a workshop in October, focused mainly on trying to put the analyses that had been done on a selected set of alternative scenarios -- A1, A2 and A3 -- into written form, said PATH facilitator Dave Marmorek. The workshop went very well, but we did recognize some problems with the modeling. Having worked out some of those bugs, we were able to get a lot closer on a lot of the assumptions.

One of the things we are trying to do is incorporate uncertainty explicitly into the results, Marmorek said, so it's not surprising that we are seeing a range of outcomes. However, we are making progress, and now have a draft letter report on spring/summer chinook, which we have attempted to organize in a way that will be intelligible to a variety of audiences, he said.

The report is currently undergoing internal review and revision; we hope to get the draft out for review by the Scientific Review Panel by the week of January 19, Marmorek continued. We

should be able to provide an additional report at the February IT meeting, he added. The bottom line, however, is that we are running about 45 days behind schedule.

Once the report is out, PATH hopes to shift gears and turn its attention to fall chinook and steelhead, Marmorek said. There is a fall chinook subgroup that has been working in parallel with the spring/summer chinook effort, so we have been making some progress. Once the draft spring/summer chinook report is out, we have been talking with the DPCG about using those very preliminary results to allow a variety of groups to respond -- to look, from a decision-maker's point of view, at the shape of the results we are going to be generating, how we will incorporate uncertainty into the results and how those results will help to inform decisions, Marmorek continued. This will also give the technical people doing economic and social analyses a chance to work with some of the numbers we are generating, to make sure everything fits together. The next logical scenario for us to analyze is probably B1, the John Day Drawdown alternative, he said; that work probably needs to proceed sooner, rather than later.

How significant is your six-week slippage? Arndt asked. Can you make it up, or is it going to impact our ability to produce the draft EIS on schedule? For spring/summer chinook, that shouldn't be a problem, Marmorek replied. For fall chinook, it may be more of a problem. According to the current schedule, we had planned to produce the preliminary decision analysis report on fall chinook by mid-July; it now looks like it will be some time in August before we can produce that report, he said. We recognize that we need to adapt our methods to fit the schedule, rather than vice versa; we're still committed to allowing you to proceed with your schedule, but the level of detail for fall chinook and steelhead is going to be less than the level of detail we've been able to provide for spring/summer chinook, Marmorek said.

Again, we are making progress, he contained. However, I want to stress that there are uncertainties in the spring/summer analysis; it's not a case where everyone will look at our results and conclude that any single option is clearly the best. The results for a given option obviously depend heavily on what assumptions you use, but one of the things we are looking for is options whose results tend to be robust across a wide range of assumptions. Marmorek added that, at the next IT meeting, he will provide an update on PATH's current schedule and priorities.

So to summarize, said Brown, the spring/summer chinook report on the initial alternatives plus John Day will be done by June, so that it can be used to support the Corps' feasibility study; the fall chinook report, originally scheduled for July, will now be available in August? That's correct, Marmorek replied. Brown said he would place the PATH schedule and priorities update on the February IT agenda. In response to a question from John Palensky, Marmorek said it would be possible for PATH to present some of its preliminary spring/summer results at the February 19 Executive Committee meeting.

C. Integrated Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). Brown said that Mike Schiewe has been working with the ISAB on the transport questions posed by the IT; the ISAB is hoping to answer those questions by the February 1 target date. I have also asked Mike to see if an ISAB member can attend the February 19 Executive Committee meeting, Brown said. He added that the ISAB has just finished reviewing the annual dissolved gas report NMFS is required to submit to Oregon DEQ; that report is due to be completed by mid-January, following the incorporation of the ISAB's comments. I believe we are also still waiting for comments from some other interested parties, Brown said.

D. Dissolved Gas Team (DGT). This update was presented during Agenda Item VII later in today's meeting.

E. System Configuration Team (SCT). Arndt said that, at its December 17 meeting, the SCT was able to reach consensus and finalize the FY'98 Columbia River Fish Mitigation package. There are no outstanding issues for FY'98, in other words, he said, although, given the reduced amount of the FY'98 appropriation, there was a lot of pain that had to be shared across the board.

F. Decision Process Coordinating Group (DPCG). DPCG facilitator Ed Sheets said two recent meetings of this group have been postponed due to the heavy workloads of its PATH member participants. The next DPCG meeting is scheduled for January 20; at that point, we will get a status report on the PATH analysis and, possibly, a draft written report, Sheets said. At the last IT meeting, I gave you a presentation about a set of recommendations, developed by the DPCG, on what the 1999 decision process might look like, he continued; we are still working on those, and have a few additional issues to deal with. Our hope is that we can bring a finished set of recommendations to the next IT meeting, Sheets said.

We have also been discussing alternatives for analysis, he continued; at the last IT meeting, it was agreed that the DPCG would review alternatives, then bring its recommendations to the Implementation Team. On the agenda for our next meeting is a discussion of the December 18 letter from Will Stelle to Steve Crow, which essentially asks the Council staff for help in analyzing several alternatives. The letter (attached as Enclosure C) includes a list of alternatives developed by NMFS in consultation with the Three Sovereigns fish and wildlife cost workgroup. These alternatives have not been reviewed by the DPCG, Sheets said; we will be reviewing them at our January meeting.

How does Stelle's letter fit in with the work that is being done by the Drawdown Regional Economic Workgroup? Arndt asked. Am I misreading this if I say this seems like a duplication of effort? I hope they are not duplicative, Sheets replied -- I hope they are consistent. DREW is doing a series of analyses of various system configurations, and I think that once the DPCG has a chance to review the alternatives appended to the NMFS letter, we will want to go back to DREW to make sure the Corps and BPA are in fact analyzing those alternatives. My understanding is that most of these pieces are being analyzed by the Corps and BPA, with the possible exception of two Snake River dams to natural river.

I understand what DREW is working on, Arndt said -- my concern is that the Council is talking about doing the same kind of economic analysis, thereby duplicating DREW's work. The reason for Stelle's letter is that BPA is about to begin its subscription process, and the Congressional delegation has said that they would like to see some estimates of future fish and wildlife costs, to be factored into that process, Sheets replied. The Transition Board has also said that they would like to see cost recovery and other issues addressed as a package by March or April of 1998, he said. The request to the Council staff is for a quicker, less-detailed economic analysis, with the goal of identifying a range of fish and wildlife costs, of which these particular items are only a subset. What NMFS, the Council and other participants in the Three Sovereigns process are trying to do is develop a reasonable estimate of the range of fish and wildlife costs BPA may face in the future, Sheets explained. Again, we only have until March or April to provide those estimates, and we didn't think the DREW work could be accelerated to meet that

deadline.

The Corps has also asked the DPCG to review some material from HARZA, having to do with modifying flow augmentation, Sheets continued – we may have something to report on that subject at the next IT meeting as well. Returning to the DPCG's basic charge – the development of recommendations to help shape the 1999 decision process – Sheets said there have been some discussions, notably between Will Stelle and Roy Hemmingway at the last Three Sovereigns meeting, about the possibility of trying collaborative decision-making. Under such a process, all of the sovereigns would pool their resources to provide the necessary staff work, analyses and decision record, with the goal of reaching consensus on a decision that would meet the statutory requirements of all of the parties involved. A lot of work will need to be done to make that process a reality, Sheets said, but the question of what is the proper forum for the 1999 decision, and whether there is a regional desire to alter the decision process path we're currently on from an ESA-focused Corps feasibility study to something different, is still an open one.

In response to a question from Sheets, Arndt said the Corps will be submitting the John Day Drawdown scoping report to Congress on schedule in mid-January. One caution about the idea of shifting the 1999 decision from the current process to the Three Sovereigns umbrella, Arndt continued – I think we need to be cautious about how we characterize that. I'm not sure it should be characterized as one process vs. the other, he said – the Corps is mandated, by law, to produce a feasibility study with NEPA documentation in order to get the authorization necessary to make substantive changes to the projects. It's not so much a question of either/or, said Arndt – it's more a question of how to work some other elements the region may perceive as necessary into that process. The other thing to bear in mind is, we're on a very fast track if the draft NEPA document is to be produced by the spring of 1999, he added.

III. 1998 Transportation – Status of Discussions.

The status of the 1998 transport program discussions is unchanged since late December, said Brown; the federal agencies are still discussing the strawman proposal and the actions in the Biological Assessment that is being prepared for listed steelhead. We expect to wrap up those discussions by the end of next week, said Brown; at that point, we will be better prepared to discuss specific transport operations.

Shortly before Christmas, Brown continued, I attended a meeting with the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority, where some of the additional information NMFS and the state of Idaho have been working on with regard to PIT-tag survivals was discussed. In response to a request at that meeting, we have since provided some additional information; some of the states and tribes also said that a more specific information request would be forthcoming following that meeting, said Brown, but I have yet to receive it.

While the federal agencies continue their internal discussions, and while the ISAB wrestles with the questions posed to them, I don't think there is anything to prevent us from going ahead with the discussion of the additional information we would like to see reviewed in the context of this decision, Brown continued, and from looking more specifically at operational alternatives at McNary. I think we should continue to discuss both of those items in this forum and at CBFWA.

IV. 1998 Water Management Plan.

Brown distributed Enclosure D, the alternate draft contents outline for the 1998 Water Management Plan for the FCRPS, developed by the TMT and dated November 26, 1997. As Doug mentioned earlier in today's meeting, the TMT has scheduled a meeting for next week, at which they will be discussing the January early-bird forecast and its implications for the Water Management Plan, Brown said. In response to a question, Arndt said Cindy Henriksen had assured him that the TMT is on track to complete the 1998 Water Management Plan by March 31. He added that, rather than simply re-working last year's plan, the TMT is starting fresh in 1998 -- this is a new plan, incorporating all of the feedback that has been received from the TMT participants.

Would it be appropriate to ask the TMT to provide an update at the IT's February meeting, so that we can discuss any issues that may have arisen, or should we leave that until March? Brown asked. It would probably be a good idea to get an update in February, Arndt replied -- if any issues do arise, I think it would be helpful for us to discuss them as early as possible. In response to a request from Brown, Arndt said he would ask Henriksen to plan to provide a Water Management Plan update at the IT's February meeting.

V. Regional Forum Facilitation Progress Report.

As you will recall, said John Palensky, in November, the Power Planning Council approved the expenditure of up to \$80,000 for regional forum facilitation in FY'98. Since that time, we have been refining the scope of work, and meeting with BPA to work on a request for proposals. BPA has assured us that they can conclude this process fairly quickly, without issuing a broad request for proposals. What BPA has suggested, Palensky explained, is that we constrain the number of proposals to a maximum of six. They further suggested that, given the small amount of money available for this contract, that may tacitly impose a requirement that the contractor chosen be located in the greater Portland area, because of the limited funds that would be available for travel.

In terms of next steps, Palensky said, the scope of work has now been modified; Alan Ruger is in the process of putting together the necessary BPA purchase request, and we now need to put together some questions that will be used as the basis for the evaluation of the candidates that apply for the facilitator position. Those questions are more or less spelled out in the "Skills Required" portion of the scope of work, he said, so that shouldn't be too difficult.

We will be providing BPA a list of the potential facilitation contractors who have contacted us, Palensky continued; BPA will then contact each of them and give them 10 business days to respond with a proposal. We will then conduct an evaluation of the proposals, and make a recommendation to the Executive Committee, who will then make a recommendation to BPA.

One question for the IT is whether you think it is appropriate to limit the request for proposals to those potential contractors who have already indicated interest in the position, or whether we should issue a broader RFP, Palensky said. Also, we have talked in the past about having the IT be involved in evaluating the applicants; if there is still interest in that type of IT involvement, we should probably talk about who will be participating in that process.

With regard to your first question, said Arndt, won't we be opening ourselves up to protest if we don't issue some sort of general notification? That surprised me as well, Palensky replied, but according to the Bonneville Acquisition Guidelines, it isn't necessary for a proposal to go out to the whole world in order for it to be competitive. What would be the harm in doing at least some limited advertising of this position? asked one meeting participant. One of the ways you justify a limited RFP is by saying that you have foreknowledge that there are a limited number of people who have the necessary talents to provide this service, replied BPA's Dan Daley. If we go out with an open advertisement, then we will have to do a full-blown RFP, a process which will take several months to complete.

The only problem with that, said EPA's Mary Lou Soscia, is that I know of a number of people who have quit their jobs recently to become facilitators, and I think it is going to be difficult to point to a small group of potential contractors and say, these are the only people who are capable of providing this service. The state of Oregon alone has a list of about 25 people who are qualified to be facilitators, she said. Perhaps BPA could use that list, supplemented by whatever ideas this group comes up with, suggested Tony Nigro of ODFW. That might be a good idea, Soscia agreed. Again, if you request proposals from that many people, said Daley, I think it will be necessary to do an open RFP -- it's up to you if you want to take that much time.

The sense I got from talking to BPA's contracting folks is that the process will need to be either very limited or very open, Palensky said -- they're really isn't an in between. The question then becomes, how long do we want this process to take, given the fact that we had initially hoped to have a facilitator on board prior to the February EC meeting? The related question is, do we want to assume that the successful candidate will need to be from the Portland area, or do we want to broaden the geographic scope as well?

Is there anything in the "Skills Required" section that says successful applicants need anything more than facilitation skills to qualify for this position? Brown asked. For example, I was wondering if there is anything in that section that refers to familiarity with fish and wildlife issues. We did discuss that, Palensky replied, but there were some who were opposed to that, and felt that familiarity with the issues should not be a requirement, mainly because anyone who is intimately familiar with these issues is likely to carry some bias.

Personally, I think the geographic question is somewhat self-limiting, said Arndt -- the contract amount simply isn't high enough to allow for a lot of travel. However, the idea of limiting the RFP to six respondents is more problematic -- who gets to pick the six candidates? Particularly in a situation that it is as high-profile as Regional Forum facilitation, I think we have to be very careful to ensure that we do a thorough search for the best candidate available. That is precisely the problem, Palensky agreed -- the few candidates who have already contacted NMFS and BPA were the ones we envisioned putting on the short list, and beyond that, I really don't know how we would go about limiting the applicants to a reasonable number.

Depending on the number of applications received, we may be able to speed up the RFP process a little bit, Daley said, but I have never seen it done in less than three months. Brown asked whether the other IT members would be comfortable if Palensky and Ruger were to compile a list of facilitation contractor candidates, comprised of those who have contacted NMFS and BPA directly, plus any additional names the IT would like to add, so that BPA can issue a limited solicitation of proposals. After some minutes of discussion, various IT members

agreed with Nigro and Soscia's suggestion that the state of Oregon's list of qualified facilitators would be the most appropriate source of facilitation candidates. Washington has a list of facilitators as well, said Tom Cooney of WDFW -- I can give you a contact who can provide that list. Daley agreed that it would be worthwhile to run this list past the BPA contracting officer's representative, together with the criteria Oregon and Washington used to develop the list -- those criteria will be the justification for limiting the solicitation to the candidates on the list, he explained.

It sounds as though there is a desire to make this a larger, but still limited, request for proposals, said Palensky -- I'll obtain the Oregon and Washington facilitator lists, together with the criteria used to compile them, and check with the BPA contracting office about the feasibility of expanding the scope of the solicitation given our available time-frame.

As for your second question, regarding the process for the review of applicants, Brown said, what do we need to decide there? As you'll recall from our discussion at previous IT meetings, Palensky said, we are talking about a two-phased approach -- first, the process by which we screen applicants and make a final recommendation, and second, the process by which we manage the facilitator's time. There is a presumption that each Regional Forum meeting will be facilitated, unless there is a consensus that a given meeting does not need to be facilitated. I don't know that we need to discuss that second issue today, but it is something we need to be thinking about, Palensky said.

After some minutes of discussion, Palensky asked which IT members would like to be involved in the applicant screening and recommendation process. Arndt volunteered to participate in this process; Nigro said he is comfortable with the idea of Palensky, Ruger and Arndt doing the initial screening. Have you extended an invitation to the tribes and other entities that are not currently a part of the NMFS process? asked Fred Olney of USFWS. I have talked to various tribal representatives, Palensky replied, and have not found a lot of interest.

Daley suggested that it might be appropriate for the IT to develop a scoring system for the applicant screening process; that might be a way for a three-person team to winnow through the proposals, using a scoring process developed through input from a broad spectrum of agencies, he said. It might be simpler for John, Alan and Doug to develop those criteria, and bring them to the IT for approval, Nigro suggested. Another meeting participant said these criteria probably need to be developed before the request for proposals is issued. After some minutes of further discussion, Palensky said he, Ruger and Arndt will develop the list of criteria and distribute it to the IT membership as soon as possible. Once the IT has a chance to review those criteria, they will be considered final, said Brown; after that, the solicitation, and the application of those criteria, will proceed. It sounds as though the next thing the IT will review in connection with facilitation is a short list of applicants, he added.

VI. MYIP Progress Report and Completion Schedule.

CBFWA's Tom Giese said he is working on a new draft of the Multi-Year Implementation Plan, with two goals in mind: first, to provide a management framework to help managers in the basin make decisions about anadromous, resident and wildlife resources; and second, to develop a 10-year budget. The content of the plan is intended to cover a variety of regional aspects, Giese said

-- things like policy direction, outstanding management issues and research and monitoring. One section of the plan lays out needs, objectives and management strategies for anadromous and resident fish on a sub-basin-by-sub-basin level. The latter section has been reviewed by the various managers responsible for individual sub-basins; their comments have now been incorporated, and our intent is that this section will provide the management framework, he explained.

The second purpose of the MYIP is to provide an action plan, Giese said -- a set of proposed actions and a 10-year budget for their implementation. We are making progress on that part of the task, he said, but we still have some work to do. Giese spent a few minutes detailing the various information sources that will be used to develop the 10-year budget. I think I can tell you that, at least for the MOA period, those costs will be greater than the budget amount available, and it will be up to the managers to prioritize projects, he said.

As far as the schedule for the completion of this iteration of the MYIP, Giese said, the anadromous portion of the document is ready to go, and will be distributed this week. The resident fish section will be ready for distribution very soon. Once CBFWA's anadromous and resident fish and wildlife caucuses have an opportunity to review the revised draft and provide their comments, a joint group, representing all three caucuses, will get together to review overlapping issues. After that, there is a CBFWA fish and wildlife managers members meeting scheduled for early February, and my hope is that the MYIP will be an item of discussion, if not approval, at that meeting, Giese said.

Bear in mind that this is a draft document, he said, and will need to be updated on a regular basis. However, the ultimate expectation is that this document will help guide the annual project selection process, and will also be a source of healthy debate among the various managers and fish and wildlife experts in the region.

VII. Dissolved Gas – Discussion of WDOE Letter.

Mark Schneider, co-chair of the Dissolved Gas Team, distributed enclosure F, the most recent draft outline for the DGT's comprehensive dissolved gas research plan. The names listed under various sections of the outline indicate the DGT participants who will be drafting those sections of the actual research plan, Schneider explained; that drafting process is now underway. As per the assignment from IT, the research plan will cover both BPA-funded dissolved gas research in support of the monitoring program and Corps-funded research in support of the gas abatement program, he added.

At the next DGT meeting, scheduled for January 23, we will get our first look at the draft sections of the actual research plan, Schneider continued. The next step will be to review those sections, which will deal primarily with what the research to date tells us, in the context of the questions posed at the November IT meeting. At that point, we can begin to develop the actual plan for ongoing and future research, he said.

Once this “retrospective analysis”, has been completed, you will shift your focus to the key outstanding questions that remain to be addressed, and the future research that is needed to address them? Nigro asked. That's correct, Schneider replied. Are you still planning to submit

the plan for ISAB review, and if so, when? asked Arndt. I'm assuming that it will go to the ISAB, but that is a decision that will be made by this group, Schneider replied -- the plan is being developed in response to a request from the IT, and it will be up to the IT to decide what to submit to the ISAB and when.

I have heard that there may be problems with the fact that some of what is currently covered in the research plan is actually part of the annual monitoring program, Cooney said. We are looking at that, Schneider replied -- it has been pointed out that, the way some of the contracts are set up, a component of a research contract can fund some of the monitoring activities. The current freeze on expenditures for research raises the question of whether that freeze also applies to the monitoring activities covered under those contracts. That is something the DGT needs to explore further; we are in the process of putting together a list of all of those components that might be affected by the freeze, with the intention of putting this question to the Council, Schneider said. And as long as the Council says it did not intend to constrain monitoring activities as well as research activities, I assume that BPA can handle the contracting end of this question, Brown said. We think so, Daley replied.

In response to a question, Schneider said the timeline for delivery of the draft research plan depends on when the section covering Corps-funded gas abatement research can be completed. Basically, we are pushing as hard as we can to get this done, he said, but it is a big project. Are there projects on the research list that require an answer before the spring of 1998? Brown asked. Yes, Schneider replied -- from a contracting standpoint, if nothing has happened by March or April of 1998, there are some projects that will not be able to go forward in 1998. The question, at least in some cases, is whether or not they should be going forward -- that's something we can't answer yet, he said. Since you're going to need to allow at least several weeks for ISAB review, said Brown, March or April doesn't leave a whole lot of time. With that in mind, perhaps we should revisit this subject at the February IT meeting. At least a status report, said Arndt -- even if you don't have a completed report, we can at least discuss where you are at that time, and deal with any issues that have arisen. That we can do, Schneider said.

Given the fact that FY'99 research proposals have to be in by January 23, I am assuming that the DGT research plan will not cover 1999 research, but will begin to be implemented in the year 2000, Palensky said. That's the way I read it, Schneider replied. To wrap this up, said Brown, I think we need to set a schedule for completion of the DGT's work. After some minutes of discussion, Brown asked that the DGT complete its retrospective analysis of what we know now, as well as at least a preliminary prospective analysis of what we need to know with regard to dissolved gas research, for both the BPA-funded and the Corps-funded dissolved gas research programs, by the end of February. In addition, I will put a DGT update on the February IT agenda, he said.

Moving on to the December 17 letter from the Washington Department of Ecology to the Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies (attached as Enclosure F), Brown said the purpose of placing this item on the agenda was to allow for some discussion of the requirements WDOE would like the federal agencies to satisfy so that implementation of the Biological Opinion can proceed in 1998. I would like to have some discussion today about exactly what those requirements are, and how we can satisfy them, he said.

WDOE's Dick Wallace said his agency's message has been consistent from the inception of the

waiver process -- that we would like to move from a study of dissolved gas to a plan of action. Another thing we wanted to accomplish was to get this incorporated in our rulemaking, Wallace said; we have now done so, and [Enclosure F] includes the relevant passages from the Washington administrative code.

Basically, what we're looking for, in exchange for allowing this violation of our water quality standards, is adequate biological and physical monitoring, Wallace said; there is nothing new there. We would also like to see an actual plan developed to address the dissolved gas problems in the system; the new wrinkle here is that we would like that plan to include a firm schedule with firm implementation milestones, with the understanding that the implementation of any long-term fix to the dissolved gas problem will be subject to budgetary limitations, Wallace said.

We see a lot of benefit to the development of such a dissolved gas abatement plan, he continued; that's why we have gone through a difficult rulemaking process to do away with the annual waiver process. The new state policy includes a long-term commitment from WDOE, allowing the 110% standard to be exceeded in exchange for a long-term commitment on the part of the federal agencies to fix the dissolved gas problem.

In response to a question from Arndt, Wallace said that his concern about the long-term dissolved gas Plan of Action currently being developed by the DGT is that it is not specific enough about exactly what is going to be done to reduce dissolved gas in the system over the next five to 10 years. What I'm interested in, he said, is the actions the federal agencies are going to take over that period to bring the system closer to compliance with the standard.

One concern I have, said Arndt, is the fact that, in the process of cutting the FY'98 CRFM budget from \$117 million to \$89 million, the SCT, with the approval of all the states, reduced the funding for the Corps's DGAS program from \$7 million to \$3.5 million. The gas abatement package that will be part of the DGT Plan of Action will now have to reflect that reduction, he said, and I think the DGT and the SCT may be the most effective venues to discuss this issue. My point is, there is only one pot of money available for this kind of work, and those dollars are being prioritized by the states, including Washington, in those venues, Arndt said. It puts us in a difficult position, because, in order to hold up our end of the bargain, we have to commit to implementing certain dissolved gas abatement actions under a fixed timeline, when, at the same time, the states' representatives to the SCT are making decisions which cut the funding for those actions.

Our expectation is that you would lay out your goals and tell us what you want to achieve, bearing in mind the uncertainty about the level of funding that will be available in future years, Wallace said. I'm not saying you have to get down to the 110% standard within five years -- I'm saying you have to set some goals, and do your best to meet them. And the Corps does have a plan, Arndt said -- the problem is, the funding to complete that plan is being cut along with the funding for many other important programs. I guess I'm unclear on exactly what WDOE wants from us, beyond that, he said.

One of the things EPA would like to see is for the estimates that are being developed for out-year fish and wildlife costs to include the cost of modifying the system to meet the Clean Water Act standard, Soscia said. The Three Sovereigns work group is trying to estimate fish and

wildlife-related costs through at least the year 2007, replied Fred Olney; we have been able to pretty clearly define a low-option gas abatement package, but as we have talked about the package, a number of parties in the region have said they would like to see more progress made in the gas abatement arena. We have not yet developed the type of high-option gas abatement package those participants are talking about, Olney said; I have been talking to Mary Lou about the possibility of getting together with EPA and some of the state and tribal representatives who are interested in the high-end option, in order to define what that high-end option might look like. That isn't necessarily going to be a plan, he cautioned -- it will mainly be an effort to identify the potential range of costs associated with gas abatement and water temperature in the future.

Nigro made the point that it is going to be difficult to develop a workable long-term gas abatement plan prior to the 1999 decision, because any gas abatement decisions that are made will be contingent on the system configuration alternative selected. With that in mind, he said, what would WDOE regard as a sufficient statement of intent on the part of the Corps, under your statute?

We have made a five-year commitment in our water quality standards, Wallace replied, allowing violation of the 110% standard. In exchange for granting what is essentially a five-year waiver, we are looking for something equivalent from the other side -- adequate biological and physical monitoring, as well as some sort of a schedule for the implementation of specific gas abatement measures. Obviously, we recognize that that schedule could change, depending on funding realities; I would say that something closer to what Fred described, which looks at dissolved gas abatement funding over the next ten years, is what WDOE is looking for, Wallace said. Basically, we want a more definitive schedule for gas abatement implementation, even one that has significant caveats attached.

Certainly, in terms of an interim approach, we could describe the gas abatement measures that will go forward no matter which system configuration option is chosen in 1999, Nigro said. We can also list the gas abatement measures that are going forward under the FY'98 budget, and that have been prioritized under the FY'99 budget. All of these things can be provided, said Tom Cooney -- beyond that, how much specificity are you looking for, in terms of when future gas abatement measures might be implemented? I guess that depends on how much specificity you think you can provide, said Eric Schlorff. And I don't want to mislead you, said Arndt -- there is a huge amount of uncertainty in many areas of the gas abatement program. Fred's group is looking at a wide array of possible futures, and they're just trying to develop cost estimates.

Still, we ought to be able to articulate a likely path for the future, based on our recent funding experience, Nigro said. And frankly, I think that's part of what we asked the DGT to do in the course of developing its Plan of Action, said Arndt -- it is supposed to address the future of gas abatement in the region. Again, said Schlorff, that Plan of Action seems to lack the level of specificity we had hoped to see. From my standpoint, at least, the DGT's plan of action needs to be detailed enough to be useful to the SCT in their prioritization process, Arndt said.

We had hoped that the Plan of Action would include a detailed set of gas abatement alternatives, together with a timetable for their implementation, Schneider said. However, we have not been able to discern what those alternatives would be under the Corps' gas abatement plan. Frankly, most of our effort in recent months has been focused on the dissolved gas research plan the IT

has asked us to develop, Schneider said. It sounds as though the SCT and Fred's Three Sovereigns workgroup are working to develop much of the information that is needed to satisfy WDOE, and I'm not sure it makes a lot of sense for the DGT to shift gears and take that on as well.

What I'm hearing from WDOE is that they are interested in a clear articulation of what incremental progress can be made toward the 110% standard over the next five to 10 years, particularly in light of the fact that whatever system configuration option is chosen in 1999 will not be implemented for five to seven years after the fact, said Brown. After some minutes of further discussion, the IT asked that the System Configuration Team work with WDOE to develop a list of the gas abatement measures funded for FY'98 and prioritized for FY'99, together with an assessment of anticipated future gas abatement implementation in FY'00, FY'01 and beyond. It was further agreed that the SCT shall draw on the DGT's expertise as required to complete this task. I will draft a memo to that effect to the SCT co-chairs, said Brown.

VIII. February Executive Committee Agenda.

Brown distributed Enclosure E, a list of possible agenda items for the February 19 Executive Committee meeting. Arndt suggested that, based on this morning's discussion, it would probably be advisable to add a Regional Forum facilitation update to the EC agenda; it may also be a good idea for NMFS to provide an update on the steelhead Biological Opinion process, he said. He added the suggestion that proposed Agenda Item 6, "Corps of Engineers Reply to Environmental Protection Agency's Concerns on Temperature and Gas," might more productively be focused on the broader issue of temperature and gas, rather than narrowly focused on the Corps response to a specific letter. Soscia agreed with this comment. After some minutes of discussion, Brown summarized this discussion by saying that "Water Quality" may be a better title for this agenda item, and that water quality issues that are specifically relevant to the 1998 season would probably be the most productive focus for this discussion. No additional items were proposed for the February EC agenda.

IX. Next Meeting Date and Agenda Items.

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Thursday, February 5 at 9 a.m. at NMFS's Portland offices. A supplemental IT meeting, to finalize items for presentation at the February 19 Executive Committee meeting, was set on an as-needed basis for Thursday, February 12 at 9 a.m. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.