

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26

Meeting Notes

March 16, 2000

Greetings and Introductions.

The March 16 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and facilitated by Cathryn Collis. The agenda and a list of attendees for the March 16 meeting 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 may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

I. Development of Plan and Schedule for Prioritization of FY'01 CRFM Program.

Hevlin said he had summarized the process the SCT used in making its FY'00 CRFM rankings and prioritizations, and had distributed this summary along with today's meeting agenda; he suggested that this document be used as the starting-point for discussion of the plan and schedule for the FY'01 ranking process. Hevlin went briefly through last year's process:

- ! Step 1 (March-April): SCT review of the FY'01 CRFM project list and workplans, with particular attention to the spreadsheet's comprehensiveness, and to line-items that may need to be unbundled
- ! Step 2 (March-April): individual SCT members develop their scores for each line-item, using the criteria laid out in Hevlin and Ruff's March 12, 1999 memo, "Proposed Criteria for Ranking Corps CRFM Projects" (attached as Enclosure C).

- ! Step 3 (May-June): separate SCT into state, federal and tribal caucuses to score the line-items, and develop separate state, federal and tribal lists
- ! Step 4 (July): combine the state, federal and tribal caucus scores into a single ranked list of SCT priorities for the FY'01 CRFM program.

After that, said Hevlin, we'll just have to wait and see what the actual FY'01 CRFM budget will be; at some point, between August and October, we'll need to get serious about the line-items on the bubble.

The group spent a few minutes discussing this suggested process; ultimately, no significant changes were suggested to the process for FY'01. John Kranda said he will send out a list of continuing FY'01 line-items arranged according to their scores from FY'00, to refresh each caucus' memory about how they scored these items last year. Rod Woodin suggested that the SCT flag any line-items that could be impacted by the configuration decisions in the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion; obviously, he said, that decision will have a huge impact on our own prioritization process, particularly at the Lower Snake projects. There was general agreement that this would be useful. John Rowan said it would also be helpful if the SCT could develop a brief description of why the SCT believes each line-item merits funding. Good suggestion, said Hevlin. The group also discussed the possibility of asking each of the caucuses to state the rationale behind any major changes to their rankings from last year; there was general agreement that this would be very helpful as well, particularly from the standpoint of saving time.

Ron Boyce asked about the possibility of any additional monies being made available for the CRFM program in FY'01; Kranda replied that he won't be able to answer that question until later in the funding process. The SCT also discussed the possibility of speeding up the CRFM scoring and prioritization process in FY'01, so that it can be concluded by July. Hevlin said he will try to hasten the tribal caucus' work by sending a letter to CRITFC asking that the tribal caucus submit any new line-items for the CRFM spreadsheet to SCT by May 1.

II. Review FY'01 CRFM Program Spreadsheet and Work Plans .

Mike Mason and John Kranda went through the most recent FY'01 CRFM spreadsheet (Enclosure D) item by item, explaining the rationale and funding level associated with each project. They also distributed the most recent package of FY'01 CRFM workplans (Enclosure E). Following this extensive presentation, Hevlin asked the SCT to review the spreadsheet and workplans, in preparation for a more intensive FY'01 CRFM program discussion at the April SCT meeting. Kranda said he will mail out a few additional workplans prior to that meeting.

III. Update from SRWG and FFDRWG on Spring and Summer Fish Spill Operations During Survival and Passage Evaluations at Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day Dams .

Hevlin said this issue has been bumped out of the SCT's hands; still, he said, any input the SCT membership might have on this issue would probably be helpful. He noted that the spill levels for Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day are still being worked out in the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion consultation process; discussions are ongoing between the Corps, Reclamation, BPA and NMFS, to determine what Bonneville's sideboards are, in terms of limitations on daytime spill at these projects. A decision has not been made at this point; NMFS wants to seek further input from the state and tribal fish and wildlife managers before the spill levels are set. A CBFWA meeting is being planned at which to gather that state and tribal input, Hevlin added.

Basically the issue has to do with the fact that the current BiOp spill level at the Dalles is 64% of total river flow, Hevlin said. Based on the recommendations from the ISAB, we need to reduce that spill level at The Dalles, to somewhere between 30% and 50% of total river flow. CRITFC and Oregon support the 50% spill level; the Corps supports 30%. The other issue is how daytime spill at The Dalles affects daytime spill at John Day and Bonneville; the proposal is to increase daytime spill at Bonneville to 120 Kcfs, in order to study the effects of that increase on juvenile passage and adult fallback. We would also like to get at least 30 Kcfs of daytime spill at John Day, Hevlin said. As we reduce the spill at The Dalles from 64% to some lower volume, he said, that determines how much additional daytime spill we can get at John Day and Bonneville, because of the transmission system constraints.

Boyce asked whether it would be appropriate to discuss this issue at tomorrow's meeting of the anadromous fish managers. We're not quite ready for you to do that yet, Hevlin replied – we want to put together a spreadsheet of the transmission limitations, the biological benefits associated with different alternatives, and other information, so that you can take a look at all of the relevant information. That will be done next week, and we'll need to plan a special meeting soon after, Hevlin said.

Hevlin also distributed Enclosure F, Rock Peters' draft notes from the special SRWG meeting on February 25. The main topic of discussion at this meeting was the study design for the survival studies at The Dalles, with some discussion of the 2000 tests at John Day and Bonneville (please refer to Enclosure F for details). The SCT devoted a few minutes of discussion to the complexities of survival study methodology, appropriate spill level and scheduling; ultimately, Hevlin observed that considerably more discussion will be needed among the state and tribal managers and the federal action agencies before the issue of the most appropriate spill level for The Dalles in 2000 can be resolved. Boyce said Hevlin's suggested spreadsheet or matrix of spill options for 2000 would be a helpful tool. We'll work on that next week, at which point you can convene the CBFWA managers, said Hevlin.

IV. Update on Chief Joseph Flow Deflector Development.

In the absence of Marian Valentine, Hevlin read a statement which said Valentine would like to present the 75% feasibility report on the John Day flow deflectors, called "A General Re-Evaluation

Review and Environmental Assessment.” This document will be going out for regional review and comment on March 20. It was agreed to defer the discussion of the most recent model work on the John Day flow deflectors until the April SCT meeting, when Valentine can be present. Hevlin asked the other SCT participants to review this report and come to the April meeting prepared to discuss it.

V. Update on Lower Granite Removable Spillway Weir.

Steve Rainey distributed Enclosure G, an update on the removable spillway weir at Lower Granite. He spent a few minutes going through its contents:

1. Schedule

- ! Complete preliminary engineering phase – April 2000
- ! Start plans and specs – April 2000
- ! Bid plans and specs – July 2000
- ! Fabrication/construction window – August 2000 through March 2001
- ! Prototype testing – March through May 2001

2. Two options: Flow-efficient and “fish-friendly” removable spillway weirs

3. General model at WES – agencies and tribes trip in early February 2000

4. Sectional model trip to ENSR on March 9, 2000

- ! Decision between the two RSW designs
- ! Consensus recommendation – fish-friendly RSW

5. RSW Deployment

- ! Three options
- ! Consensus recommendation – hinged option

6. Cost Estimates

- ! RSW – hinged, prototype only (without painting): \$7.1 million
- ! RSW – hinged, permanent facility (with painting): \$8.3 million
(Approximate 20-year life expectancy)

Enclosure G also included a series of illustrations, showing the design of the chosen removable spillway weir option and how it would be installed; please refer to Enclosure G for details.

The group spent a few minutes discussing this project; touching on operational and fishery concerns, the need for full coordination with other regional entities, ways to assess the incremental effects, in terms of survival improvements, compared to other passage improvement projects. Ultimately, no SCT objections were raised to this project.

VI. Update on Status of Adult Study Issues Discussed at the Previous SCT Meeting.

The Corps' Mike Langeslas said there is one adult study issue to follow up on – NMFS' proposed non-lethal lipid estimation study. My understanding is that Oregon and Idaho still oppose those studies, said Langeslas; the Corps' intent is to move forward with them. One study will simply be evaluating the protocol – how to use the equipment, what the effects on fish are, what kind of variability there may be in the estimates. Our feeling is that, if we're going to get into bioenergetics work, this study will provide some key information, and should proceed, Langeslas said.

The group spent a few minutes discussing the purpose of these studies; Langeslas said Steve Pettit had told him that Idaho would not elevate this issue to IT, but that, if these studies are proposed for future years, Idaho would be strongly opposed.

VII. FFDRWG Update.

Hevlin said there has not been a Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting since the last SCT meeting; he said there was a good presentation at the most recent Portland District FFDRWG meeting on the Bonneville minimum-gap runners, which will be discussed at the next SCT meeting.

VIII. Next SCT Meeting Date and Agenda Items .

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, April 20, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at NMFS' Portland offices. The group also discussed possible May meeting sites; one proposal was to meet at the Reclamation offices in Umatilla, then tour McNary and Ice Harbor Dams. Another proposal was to meet at Bonneville Dam, then tour the facilities there. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.