

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26

Meeting Notes

August 23, 2000

Greetings and Introductions.

The August 23 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at NMFS' Portland offices. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and facilitated by Trish McCarty. The agenda and a list of attendees for the August 23 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.

Hevlin noted that the main purpose of today's meeting was to talk about the FY'01 CRFM project list, particularly those projects that look like they're going to fall near the funding cutoff line. He said there are currently about 100 line-items in the spreadsheet, about 30% of which would fall below the funding cutoff line if the FY'01 CRFM budget is at or near the \$80 million Congress is expected to appropriate.

Steve Pettit said it is his understanding that the \$80 million total will be reduced by \$2 million, because Congress has earmarked that amount to pay for the Lewiston levy repairs. We've heard there may be language to that effect, said Mike Mason, but it isn't a done deal.

John Kranda noted that, if FY'01 is similar to past budget years, savings and slippage will amount to somewhere between \$8 million and \$10 million. The Corps is now estimating that the total CRFM project list would cost about \$88 million, based on the changes made since the last SCT

meeting, Kranda said; if we assume that savings and slippage can be restored during the 2001 fiscal year, and we also assume that we can carry last year's savings and slippage over into FY'01, or that supplemental funding may be made available, then the Corps isn't completely uncomfortable with that \$88 million total. On the other hand, at this point, we probably wouldn't be completely comfortable with saying that we're safe to give the go-ahead on a package of measures worth \$88 million in FY'01, Kranda said.

I. Continued Discussion of FY'01 CRFM Spreadsheet Line-Items.

Hevlin distributed Enclosure C, the most recent FY'01 CRFM measures worksheet, with tribal, federal, state and combined SCT rankings for each item. We started talking about this in detail last meeting, he said; the work begins today on moving those individual line-items around and deciding what must be funded, where we can cut costs, and what may be moving down the list. He suggested that the group begin by focusing on those items on the current list that would fall below the \$80 million funding cutoff line, to give each SCT participant an opportunity to talk about the projects that must be funded, from their perspective. We can then move to the items that presently fall above the funding cutoff line, Hevlin said, and talk about areas where it may be possible to cut costs. We can also look at the items above the cutoff line with an eye to which of those items might be deferred or re-ranked, based on our review of the new Biological Opinion, Pettit suggested. It was so agreed.

In response to a question, John Kranda said that, based on his review, he wouldn't say that the new BiOp prescribes a different program from the one the SCT currently envisions – it mentions a laundry-list of 180+ projects in no particular priority, he said, while our list currently contains only about 100 items. That's true at this point, he said; there may be some decisions that need to be made down the road that will take into account whatever the final Biological Opinion prescribes.

Does the new Biological Opinion envision anything different in terms of the SCT process, and how the region does the annual CRFM prioritizations? Bob Heinith asked. Not at this time, Hevlin replied – we're doing our usual process to bring closure to the FY'01 program. The FY'02 program will be the first one developed under the new BiOp, he added, but there isn't anything in that document that says the SCT process will change.

Heinith said that, during consultation on the BiOp, the tribes asked the federal parties how they intend to deal with the Power Planning Council amendment process, in terms of the way system configuration projects are ranked. They were unable to offer any substantive answers as to how that might be accomplished, said Heinith; has anyone here heard anything more definitive from their agencies? John Rowan replied that BPA's Fish and Wildlife Division recently received a letter from Bob Lohn of the Council staff, inviting Bonneville to work with the Council and NMFS in developing

subbasin plans and watershed assessments. Theoretically, there will be a collaboration between NMFS, in the draft Biological Opinion, the Council and Bonneville, in developing the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, Rowan said. There is some question about how involved the Council program will be in mainstem issues, he explained; the Council program tends to focus on activities away from the mainstem. That remains to be seen, said Rowan, there is still a lot of coordination that needs to occur. Bruce Suzumoto observed that there has been some discussion of creating a new body to oversee coordination between the Council program and Biological Opinion.

The remainder of today's meeting was devoted to an item-by-item discussion of the FY'01 CRFM spreadsheet, beginning with an overview of the changes made to this document in response to the comments made at the last SCT meeting. Kranda noted that the items highlighted in light green are those whose cost has changed since the last meeting; items highlighted in yellow are those the Corps is now proposing to defer or modify, items highlighted in purple are Bonneville Powerhouse 1 decision items, while those highlighted in dark green would fall below the funding cutoff line if the FY'01 CRFM budget is \$80 million or less.

A variety of comments, changes in priority and cost, questions and suggestions were made in the course of today's meeting. At the close of this discussion, Rod Woodin suggested that, based on the comments he had heard today, it may make sense for the state, tribal and federal caucuses to go back through and re-score the entire FY'01 CRFM project list prior to the next SCT meeting. Heinith said CRITFC agreed with this suggestion. The federal parties – NMFS, BPA and the Corps – opposed this suggestion, because of the amount of time and effort invested in the prioritization exercise to date and a reluctance to essentially start over at this point in the process.

Hevlin said he had heard five major issues in the course of today's discussion, which will need to be addressed at the SCT's next meeting on September 8:

- John Day ladder temperature
- McNary fallback alternatives study
- Bonneville long-term gas abatement
- Fish ladder temperature control – System
- Estuary AFEP

After a few minutes of debate, it was agreed that the three caucuses will meet prior to the next SCT meeting and assign new priorities to any items they are either opposed to, or feel deserve a higher ranking. It was further agreed that they will furnish the results of their re-ranking efforts to Kranda by September 5.

II. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Friday, September 8 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at NMFS' Portland offices. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.