

System Configuration Team (SCT)

**Meeting Notes
April 25, 2002**

Greetings and Introductions.

The April 25 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 Richard Forester. The agenda and a list of attendees for the meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B. Hevlin led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda; he distributed the notes from the March 21 SCT meeting, and asked that any comments be furnished to him prior to the SCT's May meeting..

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.

2. Discussion of Any Recent Adjustments to the FY'02 CRFM Program.

John Kranda distributed the most recent revision of the CRFM spreadsheet (Enclosure C), noting that there are no significant adjustments to the FY'02 CRFM program to report at this time. He said the Corps is looking at some funding issues, which will be discussed at a meeting on May 3; I don't want to be an alarmist, Kranda said, but we'll know for sure after May 3 if any major reprogramming is going to be necessary. Kranda said the reason for his concern is simply discussion within the Corps about nationwide funding priorities. We have been told not to worry and to keep on marching, Kranda said; historically, savings and slippage has been restored, and until we hear otherwise, we're going to assume it will happen again for FY'02. Kranda noted that, per the discussion at last month's SCT meeting, he had added a line-item to the bottom of the high-priority section for high-flow PIT (\$175,000 in FY'03).

3. FY'03 CRFM Program Prioritization.

What we did here was re-organize the line-items somewhat, Kranda said; the definite high-priority items now end at line-item 47 (cumulative cost of the high-priority line-items in FY'03: \$97.7 million). There are a further nine high-priority:questionable line-items, which

would bring the total program cost to \$104.5 million for FY'03. Kranda noted that he and Mike Mason are working on FY'03 work plans; their hope is that the revised work plans will be available in time for discussion at the May SCT meeting.

Kranda asked the other SCT participants review the revised spreadsheet (Enc. C) to ensure that he has accurately captured all of the revised priorities agreed to at the March SCT meeting. The group devoted a few minutes to a review of this document; Kranda noted that many of the FY'03 cost estimates for these line-items will become much more accurate once the workplans are complete. The group discussed how any necessary cuts might be made, given the fact that the President's budget requests \$98 million for FY'03.

What happened to our discussion of looking at the CRFM program long-term, rather than just next year? Kim Fodrea asked. The concern, of course, is that, if we start deferring some of these line-items, they're never going to get done, said Rod Woodin. I'm not sure what criteria we should use, other than the prioritization criteria the SCT has developed, plus the three-year check-in and any information that comes in about where survival bottlenecks are occurring, Kranda said.

The real problem is the half-dozen or so big-ticket items on the list, Hevlin said; it seems to me we should try to do one of those each year, in some sort of a sequence. The problem, said Woodin, is that we might start one of those projects because we have the \$2 million needed for the first year of design, but there's no possible way we're going to have the \$50 million needed to finish the project in the out-years. If we're not going to be able to make the three-year check-in goals, said Fodrea, it would be helpful to point that out as soon as possible.

A lengthy discussion ensued. Ron Boyce said he is unwilling to revisit the prioritizations the SCT has already assigned to these line-items. Again, said Fodrea, all I'm advocating is that we look at the big picture – does it make more sense to continue doing 20 smaller projects a year, or would it be better to build the Bonneville corner collector? The bottom line is really meeting the BiOp performance standards, said Boyce – it would be helpful to have some guidance, from NMFS, as to which projects are most important to meeting those objectives.

It was agreed that the best starting-point for a substantive discussion of this issue will be the CRFM spreadsheet which will be distributed at the May SCT meeting, and which will be updated to reflect the more accurate cost estimates contained in the FY'03 work plans. We can then discuss how best to come to grips with the issue Kim has raised, Forester suggested – how to ensure funding for all of the key line-items over the long term.

I'm not hearing that anyone wants to look long-term, Fodrea said. The problem is that it's not that simple, replied Mike Mason – many of the decisions we'll need to make on those big-ticket items are dependent on the results of the research we're conducting today. Kranda noted that, while the annual cost estimates for the CRFM program climb as high as \$204 million through FY'08, they fall to nearly nothing by FY'10. My concern is that, even if you average the

costs out over the next 10 years, using more reasonable cost estimates, we're still looking at an average of \$120 million a year, said Fodrea – that's just not realistic, given the current budgetary climate.

My point is that everything on this list is a BiOp item, Fodrea said – really, we need to do everything on this list. Can we do them all in 10 years? she asked. I don't think that's realistic. We at least need to do the highest-priority items, Fodrea said. What Kim is really saying is that we need a reality check, said Woodin, and that there may be a need to re-initiate consultation.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the relative importance of studies and research vs. system configuration projects within the CRFM program. Hevlin said that, in his view, since the SCT's inception, there have been no crucial or urgent line-items that have been deferred due to lack of funds. There have been important line-items that have been deferred for various reasons, such as lacking key information, Hevlin said, but so far, lack of funds really hasn't been a major constraint on the program. If you take the view that you absolutely have to fund everything on the spreadsheet, then yes, that is overwhelming, Hevlin said. The reality is that I can't think of a single instance in which we simply didn't have the funds to do a key project within the CRFM program that was ready to implement.

Boyce replied that, in his view, the playing field changed with the arrival of the 2000 BiOp; the program and the needs have grown substantially, and the reality is that there isn't going to be enough funding to do everything the BiOp requires. Steve Rainey replied that many of the BiOp RPAs are designated "implement as warranted;" they are not all absolutely required. Bruce Suzumoto said it would be helpful to reach some agreement on the question of when enough research is enough, and it becomes time to start building.

The discussion continued in this vein for some minutes. Hevlin went to the white board and created a matrix to demonstrate an example of how the cost estimates for major work at each of the eight mainstem dams through FY'10, could be laid out with a rough estimate of the total CRFM budget by year. The point of this example is that for long-term fiscal priority planning you first carve out dollar place holders in those years which you expect to implement the highest priority line items. For example, the first critical project to improve juvenile survival which is ready to go is the B2 corner collector, and the funding needed to implement has a place holder in the FY03 budget. If increased juvenile passage survival through The Dalles spillway is the next highest priority, and we expect to implement an improvement in FY04, then we carve out a funding placeholder for that. If Lower Monumental juvenile survival is the next priority, then a dollar place holder should be carved out in the years when implementation is expected.

Ultimately, it was agreed to revisit the long-term funding and prioritization question at next month's SCT meeting, once the tighter FY'03 cost estimates are available. Kranda added that he will put together a strawman projection sheet which spreads CRFM Project work and funding over 8 years at approximately \$90 million per year.

4. Updates.

A. McNary End Bay Deflector Operation and Spill Schedule. Rick Emmert reported that the four end-bay deflectors were completed in January; the Corps also bought new gate hoists to operate those end-bays. On April 2, we were testing those gate hoists, and discovered that the flip-lips were sending water up onto the fishway service bridges, Emmert said -- we could only open those gates 1.5 feet, less than the 3-4 feet required to produce the best tailrace egress conditions. We decided our best course of action was to remove the fishway service bridges, at least for this spring, so that we didn't inhibit spill operations, he said.

The contractor is in the process of removing those bridges now, said Emmert, working 12 hours a day, seven days a week. The work is going well, and all of the bridges are expected to be removed by May 8 and floated downstream by barge. At that point, said Emmert, we should be able to go to the spill pattern we designed earlier this year. Emmert noted that spill is occurring during the 12 nighttime hours up to the 120% gas cap; we've been able to spill about 180 Kcfs in all, he said, and once we're able to fully utilize the end-bay deflectors, we should be able to spill even more than that and stay within the cap. In response to a question from Hevlin, Emmert said the bridge removal project is included under the CRFM program; the cost is \$720,000.

B. McNary High-Flow Juvenile PIT Detection Results. NMFS' Earl Prentice distributed a report, dated April 20, summarizing results from the two recent tests of the McNary full flow bypass transport pipe PIT-tag system (Enclosure D). The bottom line, said Prentice, is that results were excellent for both steelhead and chinook; detection throughout the test series averaged 99.5%-100%. Please refer to Enclosure D for full details of the test results.

C. Lower Granite RSW Evaluation Results. Kevin Crum of the Corps described the preliminary tailrace egress test held at Lower Granite on April 9-12, designed to ensure acceptable tailrace egress during low spill conditions. We had the RSW operating in Bay 1, with 6-7 Kcfs flow, Bays 2 and 4 off, the rest of the bays spilling at one stop, 2 Kcfs, he said. We released fish through the RSW and spill bays, then monitored their progress through the tailrace; median egress time for the RSW fish was 4.1 minutes, for the spill bay fish, about 8 minutes. Based on these results, he said, we're proceeding with all three planned test conditions -- low spill with RSW, medium spill with RSW, and 12-hour spill to the 120% gas cap.

Any indication of survival results? Suzumoto asked. I can't provide exact numbers at this time, Crum replied; we started the official test on April 15, the first week being more or less a shakedown cruise. High flows initially messed with our spill scenarios, he said, but we've gotten that under control, and the second week has gone better, in terms of getting the low-spill and medium-spill conditions we wanted. He reiterated that there are no preliminary results from the official test to share at this time.

D. Bonneville Decision Document. Kranda distributed a brief report titled "Draft Bonneville Decision Document." Doug Clark reported that the SCT's Bonneville decision

document subgroup met April 9; those who were present agreed with Potential Decision 2: that the decision is not needed at B1 at this time, and can be deferred until the key additional information listed in the draft Decision Document becomes available. Our schedule to finalize the document is to send out a revised draft final for agency comment on May 3, with the goal of finalizing the document by the end of May, Clark said. He noted that BPA, Washington and USFWS were not represented at that meeting.

Kim Fodrea said she doesn't have a problem with Potential Decision 2; however, she said, I am concerned with continuing to study surface bypass at B1. It just seems to me that, in the analysis, there were some pretty optimistic guidance number assumptions, and it still didn't come out as a cost-effective solution, she said. Clark replied that the Corps would prefer to concentrate on lower-cost solutions wherever possible, given the fact that B1 is only operated in the spring.

Sandra Takabyashi added that, at a follow-up meeting to the subgroup meeting, there was an opportunity to brainstorm about potential solutions; there was general agreement that B2 is a higher priority, and that the solution at B1 needs to be more cost-effective -- certainly less than \$100 million. She said it was agreed that the surface bypass team would take one final look at the concept, to see whether there are elements that make it technically infeasible to pursue. Our preference would be to winnow the alternatives down to two or three for additional analysis and modeling, she said, for inclusion in the decision document. In response to a question from Woodin, Takabyashi said she does not have a better cost estimate than "less than \$100 million" for B1 at this time. In response to another question, Takabyashi said B1 JBS is still under active consideration; it is implementable at this time.

We have a workable solution at Bonneville, said Fodrea – JBS with spill. Why do we want to continue to study multiple options? Rock Peters said there are still critical uncertainties, including adult passage and fallback and multiple bypass, that are preventing that decision from being made. Until we know those issues are a problem, why not start moving ahead, given the fact that we have seven other mainstem projects at which we need to decide what to do? Fodrea asked. There are some who feel that we haven't fully explored all of our options at Bonneville, Rainey replied. Tom Lorz added that CRITFC doesn't agree that the DSM is the best solution for B1. Small though the level of effort may be in assessing those other options, said Fodrea, I still feel it's a distraction.

E. The Dalles and Lower Monumental Configuration Analyses. It was agreed to defer this agenda item until the May SCT meeting.

5. Next SCT Meeting.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, May 23. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.