

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26 Meeting Notes October 22, 2002

Greetings and Introductions.

The October 22, 2002 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 read a round of introductions, a review of the agenda and the notes from the August 22 SCT 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.

1. Less-Intrusive PIT-Tag Monitoring at Ice Harbor.

As you'll recall, said Mike Mason, for some time now we've been showing \$1 million for the less-intrusive PIT-tag monitoring line-item on the CRFM spreadsheet. However, there has also been considerable ongoing debate about whether or not this measure is needed and, if so, which project should have priority – John Day, Ice Harbor or Lower Monumental. Mason said the salmon managers had planned to debate this issue at a recent FPAC meeting, but that he had not heard the outcome of that discussion. He added that, if possible, Rebecca Kalamasz would like to proceed with less-intrusive PIT-tag monitoring at Ice Harbor this year.

Steve Pettit said that, to the best of his recollection, the salmon managers agreed that less-intrusive PIT-tag monitoring at Ice Harbor should be a top priority, because of the need to obtain survival information at the two projects above McNary. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that this issue will receive further discussion at tomorrow's FFDRWG meeting; until that occurs, Rod Woodin said he is not ready to recommend that the Corps proceed to assign a project manager and move forward with this line-item. And if FFDRWG recommends that this project proceed, is that good enough for the SCT? Hevlin asked. No SCT disagreements were raised to this statement.

2. BPA Cost Efficiency Proposals.

Bonneville's Kim Fodrea led this presentation; she began by saying that since the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion was issued, there has been ongoing research that has revealed new information about the effectiveness of some of the actions the region has been taking. Over the last two months, said Fodrea, the action agencies have been working with NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service to review configuration, spill and flow operations to see whether new information might indicate that we should modify our implementation of any of these measures, in a way that would sustain or accelerate our progress toward meeting the performance standards, but which could also potentially achieve that progress at a lower cost. We have identified several alternatives, listed in Section 5.1 of the FY'03 Implementation Plan, which the action agencies, NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service feel merit further evaluation and discussion by the Regional Forum teams, Fodrea explained. Specifically, the action agencies would like the SCT to consider the following system configuration alternatives:

Configurational Alternatives

The intent of the following options is to improve upon existing project survivals, or provide equivalent survival, while reducing spill levels. As we develop options, and if implemented, we would adaptively address necessary spill/operational requirements with the goal of meeting biological opinion performance objectives.

- Accelerate installation of a Removable Spillway Weir (RSW) and Behavioral Guidance System (BGS) at Ice Harbor Dam
- Accelerate installation of an RSW and BGS at Lower Monumental Dam
- Accelerate installation of a forebay physical guidance device at The Dalles Dam and reduce spill from levels called for in the BiOp.

Again, said Fodrea, these are just alternatives under consideration, not recommendations for implementation. We would like SCT to talk about how we might lay out a short-term plan to evaluate them further, and how we might redirect funds toward these alternatives if the decision was made to pursue them.

Kranda added that the action agencies are looking at actions that can be implemented within the 2006 time-frame – alternate configurational decisions that might be worked slightly ahead of the additional research that needs to be done at Lower Granite this year, and which could be beneficial to BPA's rate case. In the case of Ice Harbor, for example, the action agencies are looking at the possibility of getting an RSW installed by 2005 or 2006, Kranda said. At The Dalles, if everything works out, we might be able to get the behavioral guidance system in place within that time-frame. With all three of these alternatives, however, there are both biological and logistical questions, in terms of whether or not it would be possible to fund, build and install them within that time-frame, Kranda said. It would mean some additional expense in the near-term; for example, for the Ice Harbor alternative, we would probably need an extra \$750,000 as an add-on in FY'03, he said.

Would BPA be willing to direct-fund such an expenditure? Woodin asked. We're not in a position to do that, Fodrea replied. In that case, there is no way we would be able to fit these projects into the CRFM budget, Woodin observed.

At Hevlin's request, the Corps went through the details of each of these alternatives. The group offered a variety of clarifying questions and comments. Ultimately, Hevlin said that, from what he has heard today, the only one of these alternatives the Corps is recommending for additional funding in FY'03 is accelerated RSW at Ice Harbor for \$750,000. Actually, I don't believe the Corps is saying that is their recommendation at this point, said Fodrea; rather, what the action agencies are saying is that if the SCT agrees that that is an option that should be explored further, the FY'03 cost would be \$750,000. Essentially, these are the action agencies' three proposals for the region to consider, Kranda said; it would probably be fair to say that the accelerated Ice Harbor RSW offers the most benefit for BPA.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, Hevlin suggested that FFDRWG take up the details of the Ice Harbor RSW proposal, perhaps in the context of the Lower Monumental decision document. Mason agreed, noting that the LoMo decision document may well affect the ultimate configuration decision at Ice Harbor.

It sounds, then, as though, with respect to Ice Harbor, the SCT would like to wait to see whether funds will be available once the Congressional CRFM appropriation is made, said Forester. Also, I'm hearing that there are some additional details that need to be fleshed out at FFDRWG and at SCT, and that there will be additional discussion of this item at the next SCT meeting, Forester said. It also sounds as though the action agencies will be better-prepared to pursue the other two alternatives in FY'04, he added. Based on what I have heard today, that's correct, Hevlin replied. You would prefer, then, to work this within the structure of the meetings that are already scheduled? Fodrea asked. Let's get it on FFDRWG's agenda, and then we can ask the Corps to convene a meeting of the Lower Monumental Decision Document committee, Hevlin replied – that way, we can get some feedback at the November SCT meeting. It was so agreed.

3. Studies Review Work Group (SRWG) Update.

Rock Peters reported that the SRWG has now received comments from most of the states and agencies in the region on the 2003 studies package; everyone except BPA, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Power Planning Council has now provided their comments. Peters said that, this year, Portland District is planning to formally respond to all comments in letter form. There will be a meeting on October 29 at John Day Dam to discuss the list of studies needing further discussion. Rebecca Kalamasz said Walla Walla District will also be responding to comments in writing this year. The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the structure of the October 29 meeting.

4. Studies to Determine Juvenile Response to Water Acceleration and Deceleration.

Hevlin said he had asked NMFS' John Ferguson to attend today's meeting to discuss the proposed McNary flume (hydraulic behavior) study; in my opinion, said Hevlin, this study did not receive a very good hearing at the most recent Walla Walla SRWG meeting. I don't think that those in attendance at that meeting came away with a very good sense of the potential value of this study after hearing the presentation on the one-pager, Hevlin said; for that reason, I asked John Ferguson to attend today's meeting to give you a few more details.

Ferguson gave the group a detailed overview of the proposed study, touching on the history of the project, its purpose, scope, goals, design and schedule. The SCT devoted a few minutes of discussion to the proposal, ultimately agreeing to make a funding recommendation once the Congressional CRFM appropriation is known and the FY'03 CRFM program is finalized.

5. Continued Discussion of FY'03 CRFM Program.

John Kranda said Congress still has not made a decision on the exact dollar amount of the FY'03 CRFM program; the Corps is operating under a continuing resolution, a condition that is expected to continue until after the November election is concluded. For that reason, funding is very difficult at this point in time, he said, and we're scrambling to keep everything afloat. At the moment, added Peters, we need about \$2.5 million to allow our researchers to close out their FY'02 research projects; if we can't find that money, we're going to feel pretty guilty about requesting people to come in and give us their final presentations and information at the year-end review.

What about the B2 corner collector? Hevlin asked. That's one of the major cash-flow problems, Kranda replied – we're paying the contractor to the tune of \$25 million by February, because he's already pouring concrete.

Kranda then spent a few minutes going through the changes to the most recent version of the FY'03 CRFM spreadsheet; he noted that most of these alterations have been positive, in the form of reduced cost estimates for several line-items. He noted that the total estimated cost of the FY'03 CRFM package is now \$86.6 million, if all line-items are funded, very close to the expected amount of the Congressional CRFM appropriation.

The group devoted a lengthy discussion to the most recent version of the spreadsheet, identifying several items they felt merited additional discussion at FFDRWG and SRWG. Ultimately, Kranda said he will incorporate the changes discussed at today's meeting, as well as any new information, into a revised version of the CRFM spreadsheet for distribution and discussion at the next SCT meeting.

6. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Tuesday, November 26. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.