

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Meeting Notes February 19, 2004

Greetings and Introductions.

The February 19 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. The agenda and a list of attendees for the meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B. Silverberg led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

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. Update on FY'04 CRFM Budget-Cutting Effort.

Hevlin said there was an SCT conference call on February 4, at which the group gave the Corps its recommendations as to what to fund and what to cut from the FY'04 CRFM budget. I haven't heard back from the Corps about how those recommendations were received, said Hevlin. John Kranda said what the SCT recommended was generally acceptable to the Corps – reinstating the Lower Granite surface bypass hydroacoustic test over the John Day turbine biological studies, as well as the \$110,000 for Line-Item 11, barge loading.

Dana Knutsen said he has some questions for the team working on the Lower Monumental dewatering design; what they have proposed seems somewhat excessive. We'll discuss it at FFDRWG, said Steve Rainey – that would seem like a better place to resolve that issue than SCT. So the Corps will get that project done as soon as it possibly can, but it won't be up and running in FY'04? Gary Fredricks asked. That's correct, Marvin Shuttles replied, adding that this topic will be on next week's FFDRWG agenda.

We were still about \$200,000 over budget after the conference call, said Kranda, but to my mind, we're good to go for FY'04 – we're close enough. And we'll be able to move the Lower Granite behavioral guidance curtain in and out? Hevlin asked. We'll get a good biological test at that project in 2004, Knutsen replied.

In general, said Kranda, things are now settling down with respect to the FY'04 CRFM budget. The Corps did make a decision to move \$1.5 million out of the Ice Harbor RSW line-item to cover a budgetary shortfall in the Cougar temperature control project on the Willamette, he said; Ice Harbor RSW construction won't take place until the end of the fiscal year, so that \$1.5 million is essentially a loan. Kranda added that there has been some discussion of moving further CRFM funding to some of the Corps' Mississippi River projects, but at the same time, the Corps is very sensitive to the fact that the SCT has worked very hard to reach agreement on the cuts that have already been made. The bottom line is that the program the SCT settled on at the February 4 conference call is the program we are moving forward on, including the Ice Harbor RSW, Kranda said. And all of this leaves the FY'04 program at about \$68 million? Rod Woodin asked. It's now at \$68.9 million, Kranda replied, down from a Congressional appropriation of \$85 million.

3. Portland District FFDRWG Update on Construction Projects and Planned Spring and Summer Studies.

Kranda said that, on the construction front, The Dalles spill wall construction is progressing; we have received a two-week extension of the in-water work period. The contractor is working 24 days and hopes to finish up by March 15. The concrete is all in and the drilling is expected to be finished by March 1. And spill will start at The Dalles on April 21? Hevlin asked. Yes, was the reply. And the contractor is staying within budget? Hevlin asked. Yes, Kranda replied. And we will be able to evaluate it this year? Hevlin asked. Yes, Kranda replied.

The other major construction project is the Bonneville corner collector, said Kranda; the contractor is still working on the leaking gate – he's still having trouble getting it to seal under some flow conditions. The high-flow PIT crew is out there taking measurements at different pool levels today, Kranda said. Design work is underway on some intermediate splashing fixes that we hope to get in place between the Spring Creek release and the beginning of the BiOp spill season in April, he added. In response to a question from Ron Boyce, Kranda said the design will likely be a metal plate flow deflector to protect the strut. He and Fredricks described the splashing problem. Kranda said the cost of the deflector is anticipated to be about \$100,000, which falls within the contingency funding level for the project.

Kranda distributed a handout showing all of the funded and not-funded FY'04 Portland and Walla Walla District studies. Study 28 – the Lower Granite radio telemetry RSW evaluation -- is not going to be funded, said Shatters; it has been turned into a hydroacoustic study to get at the same basic information.

Where will funding for the summer spill study at Bonneville coming from? Boyce asked. It will be cost-shared between the Corps and Bonneville, Kim Fodrea replied. The BiOp spill study is already part of the program, said Steve Rainey, and Bonneville will pay for the second treatment over and above the BiOp spill study. And will there continue to be summer spill through August 31 elsewhere? Rainey asked. The executives will be meeting on April 5, and will hopefully make a decision on that issue then, Fodrea replied.

4. Walla Walla District FFDRWG Update on Construction Progress and Planned Spring and Summer Studies.

Knudsen said the McNary spill gate contract has been awarded. There was a protest by the low bidder, who was not selected due to bid preparation issues, so the contractor can't start work until that has been resolved. There is a contingency plan in place to ensure that all 22 bays will be operational for the testing that needs to happen this year. The BGS contract is continuing forward at Lower Granite; Kevin is looking at funding alternatives and refining budgets to get the \$200,000 required to move the BGS in and out, Knudsen said. Design is underway on the Lower Monumental parapet walls. Ice Harbor RSW contractors have been provided the RFP documents. We're doing a two-step process to pre-qualify bidders for that project, to save time, Kranda explained.

Shutters said the Walla Walla District FFDRWG group will be meeting next Wednesday and Thursday, February 25-26. He went briefly through the agenda for this meeting; the group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the order of the agenda. Fredricks said there are a couple of issues to discuss with respect to the Bonneville survival study at the Portland District FFDRWG meeting, one to do with the unit order priority for the study, and the other to do with the installation of the Unit 7 temporary bulkhead. He said there is also an issue to discuss with respect to the sluiceways to be used during The Dalles sluiceway study. One issue for the Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting is Lower Granite baseline spill operations -- whether we're going to go to a permanent RSW plus training spill operation -- how the project should operate once spill starts, Hevlin added. He suggested that FPAC and TMT need to discuss this issue as well. In response to a request, Hevlin said he will email the NOAA Fisheries memo on this issue to David Wills.

Boyce asked whether there was any update on the planned evaluation of McNary 1 percent. There was a recent meeting on that topic, Fodrea replied; we discussed the various concerns that have been raised about that operation, most of which will be difficult to address through monitoring. One concern that can be addressed in-season is gatewell descaling, she said; the group discussed a plan to monitor that, as well as action criteria that would trigger a reduction in unit loading. There was also some discussion of using smolt monitoring data to watch mortality and descaling, to develop a frequency distribution that would trigger a reduction, Shutters said. So you will be talking about what those threshold criteria are, said Boyce; what about the actions in response to those criteria? Those discussions are ongoing, Shutters replied.

After a few minutes of discussion, Boyce said he is disappointed that the decision to operate outside of 1 percent at McNary was not fully vetted with the states and tribes; in that context, Oregon is going to be very interested in seeing a fully fleshed-out monitoring plan for that operation. He said that, in his view, the biggest negative biological impact will come from the reduction in spill that will result from this operation, and that isn't even on the table for evaluation. There is no way to monitor that, Fodrea said. You could do a two-treatment spill test at McNary, similar to what is being done this year at Bonneville, Boyce suggested. Fodrea replied that the study designs for this project have been discussed for more than a year, and the region has had an opportunity to comment on those plans. Reducing spill at McNary by 50 Kcfs

during the spring and putting those fish through the powerhouse is going to decrease survival, said Boyce. Shuttters replied that SIMPAS has estimated the reduction in survival resulting from this reduction in spill volume at 0.5 percent. Again, said Boyce, it would be helpful to have a document that concisely lays out the planned operation and monitoring program. Woodin said he will be raising the issue of video monitoring in the gatewells.

5. FY'05 Budget and Out-Years.

Kranda distributed a new version of the CRFM spreadsheet covering a projection of the CRFM program through FY'10. Obviously there are a lot of question-marks about the specifics of this spreadsheet, he said, but this is our best guess, at this point, about what the program might look like in FY'05 and beyond. The FY'05 budget the Corps has submitted to Congress is \$98 million, and have told Congress that we have the capability to spend up to \$105 million, he said. Kranda went briefly through the new spreadsheet, noting that, for FY'05, at least, this represents a fairly optimistic view.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the out-year CRFM spreadsheet, offering a variety of questions, comments and suggestions. Kranda noted that, obviously, the intent is not to ask the SCT to make any decisions about FY'05 budgetary priorities at today's meeting; he asked the group to think about this information, and to let him know if there are any line-items they would like to see added or subtracted from the list prior to the SCT's March 18 meeting.

The discussion turned to priorities for RSW construction; it was observed that, while the SCT has recommended, for biological reasons, that Little Goose should be the next priority for an RSW, the Council and Bonneville favor Lower Monumental, primarily for economic reasons. Hevlin observed that this topic will likely arise at the April 5 Regional Executives meeting; he suggested that the SCT develop a memo, to be provided to the Council and the Executives, explaining why it would prefer that Little Goose be the next project at which an RSW would be installed.

Kranda said he will revise this spreadsheet in response to the comments received today, and will bring a new version of the document to the March 18 SCT meeting.

6. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, March 18. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.