

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26

Meeting Notes

December 16, 1998

I. Greetings and Introductions.

The December 16 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was co-chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and Jim Ruff of the Northwest Power Planning Council staff. The agenda and a list of attendees for the December 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.

II. FFDRWG Updates.

Rebecca Kalamasz of the Corps said the Studies Review Work Group met recently to discuss a number of proposals that are being considered for funding under the FY'99 CRFM "surplus" of \$4 million-\$5 million; projects under consideration include spill efficiency and tailrace pattern studies, using radio tags at Ice Harbor, the estuary PIT-tag recovery proposal and the CRITFC proposals. There was general agreement that all unfunded FY'99 proposals should be put back on the table for comment, Kalamasz said, adding that she has sent out a list of those proposals for review by the SCT and others. Based on the comments received, we will discuss which of the proposals should continue to be considered for FY'99 funding, she said, adding that she would like to conclude this process by Christmas. Ron Boyce of ODFW, Tom Lorz of CRITFC and Steve Pettit of IDFG said they will provide their comments to Kalamasz by the end of this week.

Once all comments are received, said Kalamasz, I will send out a list of the proposals various

people would like to see funded, then schedule a conference call at which the actual funding recommendations will be made. It was agreed to hold this conference call on Tuesday morning, December 22. In response to a question from Boyce, Kalamasz said there are not that many proposals that are attracting broad support among the commentators to date, so there should be adequate funding to allow all studies chosen to go forward in 1999.

Rock Peters of the Corps updated the SCT on items discussed at the November 23 FFDRWG meeting in Portland. He distributed Enclosure C, a summary of the items discussed at this meeting; please see this document for details of Peters' presentation.

III. O & M Budget Questions .

At the last SCT meeting, several questions were raised about the Corps' O & M budget, said Hevlin. Phil Thor and John Kranda agreed to take the questions the SCT had and develop a presentation to explain how the O&M budget functions, what constraints exist as to the types of projects O&M dollars can and cannot be used for and other specifics of the O&M program. It was decided to defer the actual presentation on this subject to the January SCT meeting, Hevlin said, but I thought we might spend a few minutes today identifying the exact questions we would like Phil and John to try to answer in January.

The main question we had was simply what can be funded using O&M dollars, particularly with respect to Dworshak Hatchery, said Marv Yoshinaka of USFWS. Is there a way to fund the needed Dworshak Hatchery improvements through the Corps' O&M process? Another question, which has been raised numerous times in this forum, is how the Corps goes through the process of developing O&M dollars in the future for CRFM-developed facilities, said Rod Woodin of WDFW.

Perhaps the way to structure this presentation is to begin by revisiting the MOA fish cap, suggested Witt Anderson of the Corps; we can then talk about direct funding – how that works, between BPA and the Corps – and finish with an overview of the FPOM process. It seems to me that those are the three key areas, Anderson said, although we may also want to have some discussion of the distinctions between Construction General and O&M funding. We'll work with Phil to coordinate that presentation, Anderson said.

IV. Dworshak Improvements.

Mike Mason of the Corps led this discussion, beginning with some historical background. Back in the early 1990s, he explained, the Corps did a rehab report on Dworshak Hatchery, which identified about \$19 million in needed improvements. We were never able to get the special authorization needed to make those improvements, he said, so there was general agreement within the Corps that we would have to find the money for those improvements within our O&M budget, as best we could, on an annual basis.

We have now whittled the original \$19 million list down to about \$13 million, including the item CRITFC addressed in their proposal, Dworshak Hatchery System 1, Mason said. Replacing the boiler alone on System 1, if that proves necessary, is expected to cost \$1.5 million. The procedures we would need to go through in order to get that money are defined in the agreement with BPA, Mason explained, but the takehome message today is that, at the moment, the Corps has no plans to spend any significant dollars on Dworshak Hatchery improvements, beyond normal operation and maintenance.

Are there any other ways to get the funds for these improvements in a piecemeal manner? Yoshinaka asked. That's what we've been doing, Mason replied, but again, it's all subject to the terms of the agreement. Any capital improvement of over \$200,000 is not included in the direct funding provided by BPA, he said – it would require some sort of separate agreement with BPA, and BPA would be expected to pay about 83% of whatever the total cost of those Dworshak improvements might be. There is some reluctance, on BPA's part, to commit to that.

Any expenditure on Dworshak Hatchery would be included under the fish and wildlife cap, added COE's Dave Hurson. However, the fish and wildlife cap doesn't have a pot of money attached to it – it just tells us how much we can spend. We have to find the funding for projects included under the cap from our own budget, he said.

If these Dworshak Hatchery improvements are included under the MOA, said Boyce, then it becomes a matter of the SCT coming to some agreement as to how to allocate those dollars. Where are you going to take those dollars from? Hurson asked. Under our agreement with BPA, they can't come from the Corps' regular O&M budget, he said. However, there are some funds available in the FY'99 CRFM budget, Boyce said; we've just been discussing how best to spend that money. That's CG money, said Mason – the Dworshak Hatchery improvements will have to be paid for under the O&M budget.

There is a line-item included in our FY'00 budget request that would allow us to do another rehab report, Hurson said – once that's completed, we can try to get the Dworshak Hatchery improvements into the rehab process, which would make it eligible for a special appropriation. However, it would still have to compete for funding with all of the other rehab projects nationwide. The bottom line is that we can't do this work with CG dollars, Anderson said – it's just not going to happen, because of the appropriations language which restricts the use of those funds to the eight mainstem dams.

But the issue is that the release of cold water from Dworshak to improve passage conditions in the mainstem is constrained, because of adverse impacts on growth at the hatchery, said Ruff – that's the tie-in to fish passage at the mainstem projects. Again, that's an operational matter, said Anderson – CRFM is intended to be used to improve survival at the eight mainstem dams.

After some minutes of further discussion, Ruff observed that finding \$1.5 million for the

temperature control work at Dworshak Hatchery's System 1 shouldn't be that much of a hurdle to overcome. I would certainly like to explore possible ways to get it funded, said Yoshinaka. It sounds to me as though there is a strong consensus among the salmon managers that that phase of the Dworshak improvements, at least, needs to get done, Anderson said. We need to get that message to the upper echelons of the Corps and BPA, to see if we can find a way through the MOA language. In response to a question from Ruff, no SCT participants disagreed with the statement that the temperature improvements at Dworshak are needed.

This being the case, Anderson said the logical next step would be to take this issue to the Joint Operating Committee (JOC), the BPA-Corps group that oversees the direct funding program. He said he will make an effort to get it on the agenda for the next meeting of this group. Would a separate letter be helpful, or will the SCT minutes be a sufficient record of our unanimous support for this work? Ruff asked. I'll talk to others in the Corps, and let you know, Anderson replied. We'll revisit this topic at the next SCT meeting, Hevlin said.

V. Chief Joseph Dam Gas Abatement Study.

Hevlin distributed copies of a letter from Monte McClendon, dated December 15, which explains that, after reviewing the comments received on the appraisal-level study report on gas abatement at Grand Coulee, the Corps has selected Alternatives 1, 3 and 5 for feasibility-level study. Hevlin also distributed copies of the NMFS, CRITFC, and BPA comments on the Corps' Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph gas abatement studies (these documents are attached as Enclosure C), as well as a summary of comments received on the Chief Joseph study from NMFS, USFWS, ODFW, WDOE, USBR and the Colville Tribe (Enclosure D).

The Corps' Marian Valentine reviewed the comments received to date on the Chief Joseph report (Enc. D); please see this document for details. How does the Corps plan to accomplish technical review of the gas abatement program at Chief Joseph? Boyce asked. We really haven't talked about how we would do that, Valentine replied – what would the SCT's preference be? Boyce suggested that a group of engineers and biologists, similar to the one that reviewed the Corps' DGAS program, would be his preferred option. That sounds reasonable to us, Valentine said – we'll also make sure we get the DGT involved. Ultimately, it was agreed to send notification of any upcoming meetings of this technical review group to the memberships of both the SCT and the DGT.

So what we'll be talking about, to be specific, is the developmental phase of new spillway deflectors at Chief Joseph, Ruff said – it's the plan of study, modeling and design, with installation a couple of years down the road. What we really need is a forum for technical input and integration of the studies at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee, Boyce observed. This work also needs to be integrated with the systemwide gas abatement plan effort underway through the Transboundary Gas Group, Ruff said.

In response to a question from Anderson, Monte McClendon said Reclamation has set up a meeting between USBR, the Corps and BPA to discuss possible avenues of coordination between the Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph studies; he said he will report back on the outcome of these discussions at the January SCT meeting.

It sounds as though there is agreement, then, that there will be a technical coordination group for the gas abatement studies at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee, and that it will be set up through the SCT and DGT, Ruff said. So you've gotten the green light for this study, in terms of O&M funding, Rainey said – how soon do you anticipate getting the study underway? It will be funded out of the O&M pool, Anderson said, although there are still some details that need to be worked out in terms of funding for this specific item – it looks as though the Portland, Seattle and Walla Walla Districts will have to share the pain.

VI. Update on Systemwide Approach to Dissolved Gas Abatement.

Ruff updated the SCT on the Transboundary Gas Group's effort to develop a study plan for the systemwide gas abatement study, explaining that four TGG technical workgroups have been formed: biological effects and research, monitoring and information sharing, modeling, and operational and structural abatement. All of these groups are co-chaired by a U.S. and a Canadian representative, Ruff said; there is also a systemwide dissolved gas abatement steering committee, co-chaired by Mary Lou Soscia, Les Swain from the B.C. Ministry of the Environment, and myself. That is the group that is charged with pulling together the study plan for systemwide TDG abatement, Ruff explained.

The goal of the Transboundary Gas Group, as we were charged by the IT, is to develop a study plan that looks at gas abatement on a systemwide basis, Ruff continued. Each of the work groups has its own assignments in support of that effort, generally study plan elements in their areas of expertise. Those work group assignments are due to be completed by January 31; at that point, a core group from the steering committee will begin editing and compiling each of these elements into a draft study plan, Ruff said. We will then take that draft plan to the next meeting of the full Transboundary Gas Group, scheduled for February 18 in Seattle, for review and discussion.

Once we have the study plan in hand, we will hopefully have identified everything that needs to be done, how much it will cost and how long it will take, said Ruff. At that point, each of the participants in the TGG will need to take the study plan back to their individual agencies, and ask how they can support the TGG effort, either with funding or other resources. We will also be giving it to the Council and the IT, because it needs some higher management visibility and discussion, he said. Ruff added that the only entity to step forward with a commitment of resources to the TGG effort to date is the Environmental Protection Agency.

Without firm executive-level commitment to the TGG effort, it's going to be difficult to obtain the funding you need to complete this work, Anderson observed. That's the reason I briefed the

Council on it, said Ruff, and got their official support for the development of the work plan. The IT has also agreed to put this on the next Executive Committee agenda, to push for some executive-level commitment to the importance of the systemwide study, said Anderson. It's something we all need to work at, he said.

The basic idea is to do a DGAS-type study for all the relevant reaches in the system, and to bring our information about what is needed in the Mid-Columbia, the Upper Columbia and some of the major tributaries up to the same level of the information the DGAS study has produced for the mainstem projects, said Ruff. Once we actually produce that study plan, and people have something substantive they can hold in their hands and review, it should become a little easier to sell some of the key agencies on providing support. I think Jim and Mark have done a heck of a job with a very difficult task, said Hevlin – it's important work, and it deserves whatever support we can provide.

VII. FY'00 CRFM Program Activities – Initial Comments.

At the last SCT meeting, we got the first spreadsheet for the proposed FY'00 CRFM activities, Hevlin said; we spent a few minutes going through it item by item, and following that meeting, the Fish Passage Advisory Committee did the same thing. What I'd like to do today is hear what FPAC had to say about the proposed FY'00 program, and any questions or concerns that were raised at their meeting, he said.

One of the major issues we discussed at FPAC was the schedule for implementation of the John Day extended-length screens, said Boyce -- several agencies would like to see us move out a little more quickly on screen installation. The Corps has asked for an opportunity to do some additional engineering studies related to debris in 2000, and we really question the need to do that, if it's going to delay the installation of the John Day screens another year, he said.

The FY'00 spreadsheet does lay out an option to procure 15 screens in 2000, which means those screens could be installed prior to the 2001 fish passage season, Hevlin said. Actually, ODFW, WDFW and the Fish and Wildlife Service would prefer to see those screens installed in 2000, rather than 2001, said Boyce. That's a major change to the program we've worked out, said Hevlin – you'll recall that there were several entities on SCT that don't want to see those screens installed at all. We've been very clear on the fact that the decision on screen installation has slipped to 2000, from 1999, said Anderson. Basically, if the 1999 biological test yields positive results, we're questioning the need to do additional engineering tests in 2000, if that's going to delay implementation another year, said Woodin. We can certainly have that debate as we get the 1999 results, said Anderson, but what the Corps is saying is that we don't think we're going to be in a position to make the implementation decision, absent this additional information.

The point is that there is a desire, among the FPAC membership, to get these screens installed as soon as possible, said Boyce. And the rest of us agreed to that, with the caveat that we would also

test surface bypass at John Day, so that we had a comparison between surface bypass and the extended screens, pursuant to the ISAB's recommendation, said Ruff.

The other issue we struggled with at the FPAC meeting, said Boyce, is, assuming that there is a 1999 decision, should we allocate funds for Lower Snake drawdown design in the FY'00 budget? Of course, if drawdown is the path that's chosen, said Anderson, the funding for items like the Lower Granite surface collector could be shifted to drawdown, provided that Congress is willing to buy into the removal of the Lower Snake projects. That's a key point, said Steve Rainey – if PATH says drawdown is the way to go, but Congress refuses to allocate the necessary funds to even start the design work, do we move forward on some of the other planned work, or do we do nothing? If the regional decision is to go with the breaching option, I don't see why we should spend any more money on these alternatives, even if we don't have Congressional approval for drawdown, said Steve Pettit of IDFG – that's going to be another battle entirely. Does that mean we do nothing, even though Congress may never appropriate the necessary funds for drawdown? Rainey asked. I would say we do nothing until we see clearly that Congress is not going to support drawdown, Pettit replied.

It's a question of how we want to approach the whole CRFM program, given the uncertainties about what will come out of the 1999 decision, said Anderson – do we want to take a passive approach, or do we want to lean forward in the saddle and say, these are the projects that need to go forward if we're going to continue to do everything we can for fish? Personally, he said, I think the latter approach makes a lot more sense.

Another item we discussed was what we're going to do with John Day surface collection in FY'00, because of the potential of that project to consume a large percentage of the FY'00 appropriation, said Boyce. Bonneville surface collection and the work at B2 falls into the same category, he added. Another item I had in my notes was a desire for a more comprehensive, systematic approach to the adult PIT-tag project, said Woodin. The B2 corner collector program also needs a lot of additional discussion, added Boyce, as does how to fund the John Day drawdown study.

It sounds, at least for now, as if there isn't any major heartburn with the items contained in the preliminary FY'00 spreadsheet, said Hevlin – mainly, it sounds as though we'll have some adjusting to do once we know the actual funding levels for each of the projects on the list.

VIII. Criteria Development for Prioritization of FY'00 Activities.

Hevlin distributed Enclosure F, a document containing CRITFC's proposed project selection criteria and the list of criteria developed by the SCT in 1998. What we wanted to do was compare and integrate these two lists of criteria into a single list, said Hevlin; however, there really isn't enough time remaining in today's meeting to do that task justice. After a few minutes of discussion, it was agreed to defer this criteria discussion until the next SCT agenda. One further comment, said Woodin – I really don't think it's appropriate to have the same criteria for studies as we do for implementation

items. As long as we have two sets of criteria that give you equivalent scores for ranking purposes, I think it would be more appropriate to develop separate criteria for studies and implementation items, he said. There was general agreement that this would be an appropriate course of action; it was agreed to take this up at the next SCT meeting as well.

IX. Next SCT Meeting Date and Agenda Items .

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Friday, January 22 at 9 a.m. at NMFS' Portland offices. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.