

System Configuration Team (SCT)

**Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26
Meeting Notes
September 14, 1999**

DRAFT

Greetings and Introductions.

The September 14 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 (also now of NMFS), and was facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The agenda and a list of attendees for the September 14 meeting are 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.

I. Status of the FY'00 CRFM Budget -- Update.

The Corps' John Kranda said he had reported the SCT's concerns about the risks of potential overprogramming in the FY'00 CRFM budget to Corps headquarters. You will recall that, between the Congressional appropriation and the omnibus bill, the FY'99 CRFM program received \$95 million; about \$6 million of that appropriation was lost due to savings and slippage, and the Corps also had some payback obligations out of that total. However, said Kranda, after we finished our FY'99 prioritization process, we identified only about \$80 million in CRFM activities. After the deductions for savings and slippage and paybacks, that left approximately \$14 million in available FY'99 CRFM funds. The bottom line is that we asked Corps

headquarters if we could have that \$14 million back for use in FY'00, said Kranda, and they agreed.

That money is now in the bank for use on FY'00 projects, he said. We still don't know where the Conference Committee will end up, in terms of the final FY'00 CRFM appropriation; we may not know the final number until the fiscal year starts. It is unlikely, however, that the appropriation will be less than \$65 million, said Kranda; my guess is that it will be closer to \$70 million.

The upshot is that, after deducting savings and slippage, we should have at least \$73 million to work with in FY'00, said Kranda. Given the fact that we believe we can get savings and slippage restored to the program as well, he said, we would have closer to \$77 million, which means we should be able to fund everything that is currently shown on the FY'00 CRFM spreadsheet. There is also going to be some extra money – perhaps \$1 million – available from the Corps' Portland District, Kranda added.

Rod Woodin observed that the SCT prioritization process is still important, because it will lay out a course of action should mid-year adjustments become necessary. Silverberg commended the Corps on their efforts to ensure that adequate funding is available to the program this year.

Ron Boyce raised the concern that some projects may have been cut back too much in an effort to fit them within the original \$65 million budget cap – are there any on-the-ground construction projects that have been cut back, but that now could be accelerated? he asked. Actually, we haven't reduced the cost of any of these projects to fit within that anticipated budgetary limitation, Kranda replied – the cost reductions reflected in the spreadsheet are based primarily on better estimates.

BPA's John Rowan suggested that the McNary adult collection channel stoplogs might be an example of a project that could be accelerated, given the fact that it now appears that more FY'00 funding will be available than was originally thought – currently, all you show for FY'00 is the design work, but maybe we could make the decision to initiate construction in FY'00 as well, he said. My understanding is that the stoplog design work is essentially done, replied the Corps' Mike Mason. However, it may not be possible to get a contract in place in time to get the stoplogs constructed prior to the migration season – we'll have to look into that.

We also need to decide whether or not we will entertain any new projects, such as those the tribes are proposing, at this phase of the process, said Boyce. After a few minutes of discussion, it was agreed that any new projects submitted by the tribes or other entities will be added to the FY'01 CRFM project list, although the SCT is willing to consider new proposals for funding later in FY'00, if funding is available and a convincing case can be made that they need to get underway this year. In the meantime, there was general agreement to at least get these new projects out on the table for discussion. The state and federal caucuses, however, are unwilling to reprioritize their lists to incorporate these new projects at this time.

I don't want to give the tribes the message that we are shutting these new projects out, in terms of our discussion of the FY'00 CRFM prioritization process, Hevlin said – however, I think any new projects probably need to be discussed first by FFDRWG before we put them on the SCT agenda later this year.

The tribes don't have the resources to fully participate in this process, said Heinith, but they are giving you their input through this prioritized project list. If the SCT chooses not to consider these projects for funding in FY'00, he said, I think the tribes are basically going to give up on this process. We don't even have a final budget number from the Conference Committee, said Heinith, yet you're saying, essentially, that the door is closed to these new projects.

I didn't hear anyone say that the door is closed, said Boyce – what I heard is that we will consider the projects that are currently on the spreadsheet first, because we have them in hand, and have been discussing them for several months. We are willing to consider new projects for funding in FY'00 if money is available and a convincing case can be made that they are needed, but funding is probably more likely in FY'01. And we can begin the discussion of new projects today, said Silverberg.

The group then spent a few minutes going through the FY'00 CRFM spreadsheet, identifying the following projects for possible acceleration:

The Dalles Emergency Auxiliary H2O Supply Study – it was agreed that it may be desirable to accelerate the outfall relocation component of this line-item.
The Dalles Adult Channel Dewatering
McNary Lamprey Evaluation
McNary Adult Collection Channel Stoplogs

The group continued on through the list, providing a comments on a variety of specific FY'00 CRFM projects. With respect to The Dalles Spillway and Sluiceway Survival Study line-item, Heinith observed that last year, NMFS pledged that there would be an independent scientific assessment of the methodology before we began another year of survival studies. Where does that stand? he asked. We are going to do that, Hevlin replied – we're going to ask the ISAB to review the results from the last three years, and to make a recommendation about where we should go from here. Hevlin said he will draft a letter to this effect, to be sent to the ISAB, and will provide it for review at the October SCT meeting. There are also issues raised by the tribes, Oregon and Washington regarding the current experimental design, in addition to the issue of what the results from the last three years tell us, said Boyce – we would like that to be done as soon as possible. Actually, what I envision the ISAB telling us is what should be studied next, and how, said Hevlin. Perhaps we can put that on the agenda for the September 24 meeting, Silverberg suggested.

With respect to the John Day Spillway Surface Bypass line-item, the cost estimate was increased to \$250,000 for FY'00. Boyce said it is a high priority, from Oregon's perspective, to keep this project moving along. He added that there was agreement, at a previous SCT meeting, to organize a separate meeting to keep this project moving forward.

With respect to the System – Gas Abatement Study line-item, in response to a question from Heinith, Kranda said the Corps will be holding a special FFDRWG meeting on September 23-24 to discuss the Gas Abatement Program.

It was noted that the states have not yet ranked the Ice Harbor Flow Deflectors line-item.

II. Summary of the Tribal Caucus Scoring Results.

The group discussed Enclosure C, the tribal rankings of the FY'00 CRFM projects; most of this discussion was focused on the new items the tribes are proposing for funding in FY'00, beginning with the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee High Head Dam Adult Passage Engineering and Feasibility Design Study. Heinith noted that this project is under discussion by FFDRWG; Kranda observed that it cannot be considered for CRFM funding, which is limited to the eight Lower Snake and Lower Columbia dams. Heinith said that, from the perspective of the upriver tribes, there needs to be a meeting on this topic between the Corps, Reclamation and the upriver tribes.

I would suggest that we take this issue to the IT, and inform them of the tribes' interest in having such a meeting, said Hevlin – I think it's beyond the SCT's current scope. If the IT directs the SCT to get involved, he said, we can do so, but that needs to be decided at a higher level first. Woodin further suggested that this issue should probably be worked through the Framework process first, before engineering feasibility-level studies are requested; Heinith replied that, because this is such a high priority, from the tribal perspective, the tribes would like to move forward on all fronts, as soon as possible – we need a scoping study, at minimum, to look at adult passage alternatives, he said.

With respect to the Fish Ladder Temperature Control Evaluations project, Heinith said the tribes would like to move forward on engineering solutions in FY'00. Initially, the tribes are proposing that this evaluation focus on the John Day project, because it has particular problems with its adult fishways. The goal of this project is to put cooler water into the fishways, so that adult migrants aren't forced to hold in water that exceeds the temperature standard, he said. Are you talking about bringing the fishway temperatures into line with the temperatures in the reservoir above? Kranda asked. Yes, Heinith replied. The Corps will pull that information together in the John Day ladder holding and jumping study, under the Adult Measures line-item, to see whether a temperature problem does in fact exist and what can be done to solve it, as a first step, said Kranda.

With respect to the Survival and FPE Studies line-item, Heinith said the intent is to do a hydroacoustic evaluation of the level of spill efficiency that might be achieved using various spill patterns at the Snake River Dams and McNary. BPA's Bill Maslen highlighted the policy implications of a summer spill test at the Snake River projects, where the current policy is to maximize transportation – basically, he said, this is not a question that can be resolved at a technical level.

The discussion moved on to the tribes' proposed Chief Joseph Flow Deflectors line-item; Kranda assured Heinith that construction of this project will be covered by Construction General funds in FY'01.

With respect to the Bonneville Model Construction at WES line-item, Heinith said the tribes are recommending the construction of a smaller Bonneville model to give the region the ability to test various passage routes etc. While Steve Rainey noted that much of what the tribes are proposing is already being moved forward, Heinith said the tribes would prefer that the entire package proceed. Hevlin suggested that this project be designated for consideration in FY'01, with the caveat that FFDRWG will give it serious consideration as soon as possible.

Moving on to the Bonneville Research Facility line-item, Heinith noted that this project enjoys both tribal and Council support. We need to get going on this, he said, so that we have a laboratory in the river where we can do engineering work on juvenile and adult salmon. In response to a question from Heinith, Mason said the local Corps offices have long supported the construction of a regional research facility here in the Northwest; however, there is a general Corps freeze on new facilities. There are also issues

associated with who would staff, operate and maintain such a facility, he said. After a few minutes of debate, there was general agreement that the SCT will continue to discuss this item, and that the Corps will bring a policy statement on this issue to the next meeting.

With respect to the Adult Lamprey Engineering/Design for Prototype at Bonneville for Improvements to Adult Passage line-item, Kranda noted that this project is already included under the Adult Measures item in the current spreadsheet.

Moving on to the Repairs and Improvements to Adult Fishway Facilities, Dworshak Hatchery Improvements and Temperature Monitoring line-item, Mason observed that at least some of the adult fishway work is included under the auxiliary water supply work that will be done at the four Lower Snake projects. He added that, time and again, the Corps has said that the Dworshak Hatchery improvements fall outside the scope of the CRFM program; however, the Corps is attempting to get CG funding for a major rehab of the Dworshak Hatchery. The group spent a few minutes discussing this item; ultimately, Hevlin suggested that Heinith continue to pursue the issue of the proper funding venue for the Dworshak Hatchery improvements through the Framework process.

The last new project on the tribal list is Adult Shad Removal from Adult Ladders, said Heinith; this item is included in the Biological Opinion, he said, and the tribes would like to get the engineering work underway as soon as possible.

III. Review and Discussion of Composite FY'00 CRFM Ranking Results.

This item was not discussed at today's meeting.

IV. Next SCT Meeting Date and Agenda Items.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Friday, September 24, from 9 a.m. to noon at NMFS' Portland offices. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.