System Configuration Team Meeting

NOAA Fisheries Offices
Portland, OR
October 21, 2004

1. Greetings and Introductions.

SCT chair Bill Hevlin welcomed everyone to today's meeting, held October 21, 2004 at NOAA Fisheries' Portland office. Hevlin led a round of introductions and a review of today's agenda, as well as a review of the minutes from the September SCT meeting.

The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the items discussed and decisions made at this meeting. Please contact Kathy Ceballos (503/230-5420) with any comments or questions on this summary.

2. Portland and Walla Walla District FFDRWG Update.

Hevlin said the next Portland District FFDRWG meeting is scheduled for October 28. David Wills noted that a lamprey passage summit will take place tomorrow at Portland State University. The next Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting is scheduled for November 2-4, Hevlin said; the AFEP study review starts November 15, and runs through noon on Thursday, November 18.

3. SRWG Update and Schedule of Future Meetings.

Hevlin said he is unaware of any scheduled SRWG meetings, although one will be needed soon.

4. Lower Granite RSW (and BGS?) Passage Evaluation for Fall Chinook.

Hevlin said that, about a month ago, BPA indicated an interest in finding out why the summer RSW test at Ice Harbor would necessarily represent what was happening at Lower Granite. He distributed a document titled "Rationale for Summer RSW at Lower Granite" (Enc. C), which lays out the reasons why NOAA Fisheries believes a summer RSW evaluation would be valuable for Lower Granite in 2005. He said he had sent this document out, and had received comments from the Corps, among others. We need to make a decision about this by late fall, so that tags can be purchased in time,

hesaid, adding that the study is expected to cost about $2 million. The Corps has indicated that the tags need to be purchased in December. Kim Fodrea noted that Bonneville was able to purchase the tags for its 2004 Bonneville summer test in February, so there may be some additional time.

This is certainly something I'm trying to keep in front of my managers, said Nic Lane, but late November may be too soon to ask them to make a decision. Why can't we take fish from, say, Lower Granite, and release them in Ice Harbor pool? Fodrea asked. You're taking those fish out of the run and placing them at Ice Harbor, with another group of fish, Hevlin replied – that would probably be my first response. It could really bias the results, in terms of looking at the behavior of fish first arriving at the first upstream project. Will we need a detailed study like this at each project? Fodrea asked. If we can't use Lower Granite as a surrogate for any of the other Lower Snake projects, it seems to me that we might, she said. Wills observed that Lower Granite is the key passage point; if we can successfully use the RSW to keep a large percentage of the run in-river, that's what we want to find out. Russ Kiefer said the answer to Fodrea's question will depend on the consistency of the results seen once RSWs are installed at more than one project. The goal is to get some information on the use and effectiveness of the RSW, Wills added.

Will the study look at all routes of passage, including turbines? John Kranda asked. It would be a radio-tag study, similar to what we've done in the past, Hevlin replied. Obviously the bottom line, for Bonneville, is how much spill would need to be provided, and for how many weeks. To arrive at that calculation, we probably need a special SRWG meeting. That would be very helpful, Lane replied; it would also be helpful to have a solid biological rationale for why the study can't be done at Ice Harbor. Tom Lorz observed that handling, transport and behavior issues make collecting fish at Lower Granite to do an Ice Harbor study impractical, in his view. Lorz added that he will talk to the other salmon managers about potential study designs at the next FPAC meeting. Russ Kiefer observed that RSWs are a cornerstone of the actions in the new draft BiOp, but we know nothing about how RSWs work for fall chinook. It seems to me that we need to direct our resources to the most critical uncertainties, and certainly Snake River fall chinook behavior is one of those critical uncertainties.

What we're looking for is a solid study design, with broad support from the salmon managers, Fodrea said – after that, we'll need to weigh what information will be gained against the cost of the study – it's not a done deal, at this point. I think we've got our sideboards in place, even without a commitment to a specific volume and duration of spill from Bonneville, said Wills – we've been down this road before.

With respect to the BGS, said Hevlin, Kevin Crum has told me not to assume that the BGS will be in the river after next summer. In other words, if we want to include the BGS in the test, this may be our last opportunity. Lorz said it should be possible for the salmon managers to develop a strawman study design by late next week. If you can develop that before the Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting on November 3-4, that

would be very helpful, said Hevlin. Fodrea asked that, at their Tuesday meeting, the salmon managers consider including an RSW-only treatment, with no training spill.

5. Continued Discussion of FY'05 Program Measures.

Kranda said that, at the September SCT meeting, the group had discussed the fact that, in looking at the BiOp issue of gap analysis, and looking at potential budgets for the out-years, the Corps now sees the lower river as its main priority, because the lower river provides in-river passage for both Snake River and Upper Columbia fish. It seemed to us that, in looking at budgets, it made sense to concentrate on the lower river. We would therefore like to recommend that McNary, rather than Little Goose, be the next priority for RSW construction after Lower Monumental, Kranda said, adding that the most feasible assumption about RSW construction would be about one per year.

The assumption we've put into the updated proposed action is that we could do Lower Monumental in 2007, then either Little Goose or the first McNary RSW in 2008, and the second McNary RSW in 2009. We would then do Little Goose in 2010? Fodrea asked. We can explore that, Kranda replied. It also has to do with baseline data, added Dana Knutsen – we have two years of data at McNary, one year of data at Lower Monumental, but no baseline data for Little Goose, which is a cause of apprehension at the Corps, if we were to push ahead with RSW construction at that project. After a few minutes of discussion, Hevlin observed that it may make sense to defer this decision until the results of the two-RSW test are available.

Kranda then distributed the most recent version of the FY'05 CRFM measures worksheet. How does this change in strategy affect the spreadsheet? Hevlin asked. Line-item 4 (McNary RSW) has gone from $50,000 to $1.7 million, while Line-item 3 (Little Goose RSW) has been zeroed out for FY'05, Kranda replied. Fodrea suggested that a meeting of the action agencies' hydro team would be appropriate, in terms of further discussion of this change in emphasis.

Moving down through the spreadsheet, Kranda noted that all of the shaded items are items that have been changed since the last SCT meeting. He noted that the Corps continues to operate under continuing resolution, because Congress has not yet finalized the FY'05 appropriation, and probably will not do so until after the election. He said the total cost of the FY'05 program ($72.9 million, including Corps add-ons) has not changed significantly since the last meeting.

The group then devoted a lengthy discussion to the line-items whose scope or cost estimates have changed since the September meeting:

1. Line-item 10 (Lower Granite RSW) – cost has changed, now spring only
2. Line-item 13 (high-flow PIT detection in B2 corner collector) – reduced due to delay

3. Line-item 15 (Bonneville adult PIT) – cost has increased, bids higher than expected
4. Line-item 16 (John Day configuration decision document and surface bypass placeholder) – increased cost by $600,000 for model verification
5. Line-item 20 (PH2 FGE) – placeholder; may be some savings to be found if SCT decides to delay or reduce late FY'05 construction
6. Line-item 21 (Bonneville juvenile fish passage studies) – second treatment removed, cost reduced – needs more SRWG discussion
7. Line-item 23 (Lower Granite surface bypass program)
8. Line-item 26 (delayed mortality of juveniles) – cost revised downward from $4.2 million
9. Line-item 27 (B2 corner collector follow-on) – Corps has issues with slope stability; cost increased
10. Line-item 28 (John Day Biological studies) – cost zeroed out, delay for one year
11. Line-item 32 (B2 DSM, monitoring, outfall – reduced estimate
12. Line-item 33 (The Dalles surface bypass/forebay passage) – cost and scope reduced; more discussion needed once '04 test results are available
13. Line-item 34 (Lower Granite JBS improvements) – cost increases
14. Line-item 38 (Lower Granite adult trap modifications) – cost reduced; CRFM not the right funding source
15. Line-item 40 (fish ladder transition pool and weir modification evaluation) – Corps has deferred construction on this line-item based on SCT feedback; cost reduced to $100,000
16. Line-item 46 (McNary survival/efficiency study) – cost reduced slightly
17. Line-item 48 (Little Goose survival/efficiency study) – efficiency study only; cost estimate reduced
18. Line-item 49 (Lower Monumental survival/efficiency study) – another year of baseline study; cost estimate revised. Still some question in NOAA Fisheries' mind that this is needed; will no more once 2004 test results are available.

The bottom line is that the cost of the line-items prioritized by the SCT has now been reduced to about $71 million. Knutsen and Kranda briefly described the $1.6 million in Corps add-ons, including the Lower Monumental spillway parapet wall ($620,000), the McNary forebay temperature study ($300,000), TRT support ($300,000), the Lower Monumental near-field test ($140,000), the B2 trash rake ($330,000) and The Dalles J-block system removal (cost unknown). Kranda said that, assuming an $80 million appropriation, once savings and slippage are deducted, the total available for FY'05 CRFM implementation will probably be in the ballpark of the $73 million total program cost. They also touched on some non-shaded line-items, such as 44 (McNary extended-length screens), that have been deferred from previous years, but need to be funded in FY'05. Hevlin said he would like to have some additional discussions at FFDRWG about Line-item 46 (McNary survival/efficiency study).

Russ Kiefer said that, for the record, IDFG is not ready to agree, at this time, that Little Goose should be a lower priority for RSW construction than McNary; that's a topic we'll need to discuss further at the November SCT meeting, he said.

6. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next System Configuration Team meeting was set for the afternoon of Tuesday, November 23, beginning at 1 p.m.(probably) Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, Bonneville contractor.