

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Meeting Notes May 26, 2004

Greetings and Introductions.

The May 26 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. Hevlin 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 Spring Operations and Studies Underway.

Mike Langsley reported that the new VBS design study is ongoing at John Day; there are no results to report as yet. The balloon tag studies are nearly complete at The Dalles; the new configuration looks very promising. Things are going well with all of the ongoing studies. John Kranda said there has been some concern about the likely quality of the Bonneville 2 corner collector test results this summer because of expected low flows. There is a Studies Review Work Group meeting scheduled for tomorrow to review the one-page research summaries, develop rankings and suggest any necessary changes. There is also a one-page proposal for 2004 summer spill studies, for evaluating the assumptions underlying subyearling chinook studies, Langsley noted – methods to better study those fish. The Corps is hoping to obtain funding to initiate that study this year, so it should be a priority for SCT member review.

Marvin Shutters said the high-density test of the high-velocity separator is ongoing; the radio telemetry survival studies are underway at Lower Monumental, Ice Harbor and McNary. He noted that one problem with the McNary radio telemetry study is that the fish quality this year has left a lot to be desired. The Ice Harbor spillway Hi-Z tag study ended last week; there are no results to report at this time. The kelt transport study should also be underway by now, he added.

3. Update on Any New FFDRWG Actions or Information.

Shutters said the Walla Walla District FFDRWG met last week; the primary topics discussed at that meeting were updates on ongoing projects, including the Ice Harbor RSW schedule, whether a BGS should be a part of the Ice Harbor RSW design, moving forward on the Lower Monumental RSW design so that project can be installed by 2006, and problems with the McNary modernization study. There will be a conference call to discuss the McNary test results this Friday, Shutters said.

At the most recent Portland District FFDRWG meeting, said Langsley, the main topics of conversation were the removal of The Dalles J-blocks, the forebay guidance device at The Dalles, the decision documents for The Dalles and John Day, sea lion predation below Bonneville Dam, the energy dissipation box at the B2 JBS, and B2 FGE. The next Portland District FFDRWG meeting is scheduled for Friday, August 13.

4. Continued Discussion of Technical Considerations and the Multi-Year Schedule for RSW Installation at Little Goose, Lower Monumental and McNary Dams.

As you'll recall, we had about a two-hour discussion on this topic at last month's SCT meeting, said Hevlin; where we left it was that the Corps had funding to model the Lower Monumental RSW in FY'04, and that was the track they intended to pursue. FFDRWG then considered this issue at its most recent meeting, said Hevlin; one option that was discussed was installing the Lower Monumental RSW by 2006, rather than 2007. The response from the Corps was that, if the SCT endorses Lower Monumental as the next RSW priority at today's meeting, it should be possible to install it by 2006.

At today's meeting, Russ Kiefer said the salmon managers would like to see RSWs installed at all four Lower Snake projects by 2007. We're not going to hang up that goal on whether we do Lower Monumental or Little Goose first, he said – installation at all four projects by 2007 is the overriding goal. One concern is that we won't have subyearling RSW test results before the contract is let for the next RSW, he said; even so, we're willing to go ahead and commit a large chunk of available SCT funding to RSW construction for the next few years. We would also like to get the feasibility studies underway as soon as possible for McNary RSW construction.

And the salmon managers would want the last RSW operational by April 1, 2007? Dana Knutsen asked. Correct Kiefer replied – we understand that is a tight schedule, but we have faith in the outstanding engineering ability of the Corps. Kiefer said SCT should consider sending a letter to the Corps expressing this recommendation. He added that, in the interest of cost-effectiveness, the salmon managers are willing to agree that the remaining RSWs need not be engineered to withstand a 200-year flood.

The group discussed the feasibility of developing the Lower Monumental and Little Goose RSWs on parallel tracks. John Kranda asked whether the salmon managers would object if this parallel path would result in RSW installation at both projects in 2007. I think that would

fit in with my state's goals, Kiefer replied. Shutters inquired about the availability of funding to start the Little Goose RSW design this year; it was agreed that Shutters will discuss 2004 funding needs with the Walla Walla District technical personnel, and the SCT will discuss this issue further at its June meeting. And should we continue with the spillway issues investigation at Ice Harbor? Knutsen asked. If there are spillway survival studies in 2005, there could be tagged fish that pass the Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor spillways, Steve Rainey observed. If there are technical issues to be discussed at Ice Harbor, said Ron Boyce, we're willing to work with you to resolve them.

The group devoted a few minutes of additional discussion to the technical and economic issues surrounding RSW design and installation at Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental and Little Goose, as well as the Corps' concerns about the technical justification for such a sweeping construction program. There was general SCT agreement that both the salmon managers (including NOAA Fisheries) and Bonneville have looked closely at the available biological and economic data and strongly support RSW construction at all four Snake River projects. Hevlin said the SCT will provide the letter of SCT support by some time next week.

5. Review Updated Multi-Year Spreadsheet and Focus on Higher Priorities for the FY'05 CRFM Program.

Kranda distributed the most recent draft of the multi-year CRFM spreadsheet, noting that the white-shaded line-items were the highest-rated priorities for FY'04. The question is how any continuing high-priority line-items will affect our outyear funding availability, Kranda said. The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the spreadsheet, discussing ways it might be organized differently, as well as how to begin setting FY'05 budgetary priorities. It was agreed that Kranda will provide an updated version of the spreadsheet, with more accurate budgetary numbers, at the next SCT meeting. It was further agreed that, once the revised spreadsheet is available, the salmon managers and the federal agencies will meet separately to develop a strawman prioritization proposal for FY'05. Ken Barnhardt suggested that the SCT also schedule a discussion of the ISAP's recent review of the research program; it may even make sense to invite one of their representatives to attend the June SCT meeting to discuss the review.

6. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next System Configuration Team meeting was set for June 17. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.