Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Regional Coordination Forum Notes
April 10, 2023

ATTENDEES:

Art Martin - ODFW	John Shurts - Council staff
Ben Blank - WDFW	Jonathan McCloud - BPA
Ben Hausmann - BPA	Kate Self - Council staff
Bill Bosch - YN	Kendra Coles - Council staff
Bill Edmonds - Council staff	Kerry Berg - Council staff-MT
Carlos Matthew - BPA	Kris Homel - Council staff
Cathy Kellon - Council staff-OR	Laura Gephart - CRITFC
Charlene Hurst - WDFW	Laura Robinson - UCUT
Charles Brushwood - CCT	Lawrence Schwabe - CTGR
Chris Read - BPA	Leslie Bach - Council staff
Dan Rawding - WDFW	Louie Pitt Jr. - Council-OR
Derek Abrahamson - STOI	Mark Fritsch - Council staff
Don Jacob	Matt Boyer - MFWP
Donella Miller - CRITFC	Maureen Hess - Council staff
Doug Hatch - CRITFC	Mike Milburn - Council-MT
Ed Schriever - Council-ID	Mitch Silvers - Senator Crapo staff
Erik Merrill - Council staff	Patty O'Toole - Council staff
Greg Sieglitz - NOAA	Ralph Allen - CDLT
Hayley Nuetzel - CRITFC	Ray Entz - Kalispel Tribe
Heather Nicholson	Sara Mounts - Council staff
Jay Hesse - NPT	Scott Donahue - BPA
Jen Graham - CTWS	Shawn Young - KTOI
Jim Lyman - CTWS	Stacy Horton - Council staff-WA
Joe Maroney - Kalispel Tribe	Tom Iverson - YN
John Powell - IDFG	Tucker Jones - ODFW
	Others unable to identify on the phone

AGENDA:

1:00 PM	Welcome and Introductions
1:25 – 4:00 PM	Topics to discuss below *(break as needed)*
1. Discussion of regional coordination funding in the Program 2. Update on next Program amendment timeframe 3. Discussion of future project review process 4. Program Tracker demo and discussion of Strategy Performance Indicators 5. Update on Governors Report and future reporting discussion 6. Discussion on flat funding 7. Other topics if time allows	
3:55 PM	Wrap up and schedule next meeting

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Mike Milburn (MT) - opening remarks and welcome.
Maureen Hess - agenda, logistics, and hopes for the meeting.
Patty O'Toole - welcome remarks and introduction of new council members and staff.

Maureen, through a rollcall of the entities with a regional coordination project contract, confirmed the individuals who serve as the Regional Coordinators:

Organization	Regional Coordination - Lead contact
Coeur d'Alene Tribe	Ralph Allan
Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission	Laura Gephardt
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	Lynn Ducharme
Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians	Mike Kennedy
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Chuck Brushwood
Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde	Lawrence Schwabe
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	Gene Shippentower
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs	Jennifer Graham
Cowlitz Indian Tribe	Dalton Fry
Idaho Department of Fish and Game	John Powell
Kalispel Tribe of Indians	Ray Entz
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho	Shawn Young
Montana Fish and Wildlife & Parks	Matt Boyer
Nez Perce Tribe	Jay Hesse
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife	Art Martin
Spokane Tribe of Indians	Derek Abrahamson

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Upper Columbia United Tribes	Laura Robinson
Upper Snake River Tribes	Scott Hauser
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	Ben Blank
Yakama Nation	Tom Iverson

Regional Coordination Entities *present*: Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Montana Fish and Wildlife & Parks, Nez Perce Tribe, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Upper Columbia United Tribes, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Yakama Nation
Also: National Marine Fisheries Service, Bonneville Power Administration

Regional Coordination Entities *not present*: Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Upper Snake River Tribes

Agenda Item 1. Discussion of regional coordination funding in the Program
Summary (Patty): Background of the program beginning with the NW Power Act. A history of regional coordination starting with the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority. Around 2007 the funding shifted to individual agencies and tribes. Discussion of the current Project Review recommendations and development of a list of supported tasks. 2014 brought current program language in Part 6, Section B which also includes a list of supported tasks. Review of entities and their primary work elements that currently receive regional coordination funding. Implementation includes the requirement to participate in RCF and a subset of priority activities identified by the group which this group may discuss today as well. Development of annual work plans based on priorities outlined in this forum is also required, would like to hear feedback from this group today. Some projects also submit annual reports. Reminder to update points of contact for each organization.

Discussion:

- Comment: Inquiry into the amount of money that each entity received is the same across the board.
    - Response: The amount varies slightly by entity. Some may opt to take part or all of their regional funding and put it toward a different entity in order to have that entity represent them in that forum.
    - Response: The decision made was contrary to the fish and wildlife manager's recommendations. It was the total amount of the CBFWA contract divided by 19. There haven't been COLA adjustments over the last 10 years, funding has been consistent.
- Comment: They get enough funding for about 10 mos. of full-time FTE for one person and then it is also staffed by others. It would take away from what we could deliver now if we had additional bureaucratic requirements.

- Comment: How do people view things like StreamNet and PNAMP in the last couple of years? How are folks supporting that if not through the original funding? Suggested that there should be consideration to how the money is divided in the future.
  - Response: Suggestion that some of that funding should be directed to those things to keep them going into the future.
  - Response: Prioritizing data management will continue to be useful and so there be some time requirement to reach an answer.
- Comment: Originally, this was a regional solution without central oversight. The funding is currently insufficient and that results in the entities making their own priorities based on limited funding. The original idea was to support us, not us support the Council priorities.
  - Response: Acknowledgement that the Council language does not reflect that at this time. It was language rolled over from the original starting point.
- Comment: PNAMP and StreamNet did not take any of the recommendations for developing regional priorities, especially in areas of resident fish and wildlife actions/needs. These programs are independent of "Managers" needs or interests. So as such we participate in neither program as they do not represent or reflect our particular needs. 2007/08 were the first years of coordination funding from BPA to participants.

Agenda Item 2: Update on next Program amendment timeframe
Summary: Patty reminded the group that the Northwest Power Plan is reviewed no less than every five years, and the Fish and Wildlife Program must be amended prior to the Power Plan review. The next amendment process will be here soon. Amended Program needs to be adopted by fall of 2026 (estimated). Call for recommendations possibly in early 2025, although we are staying flexible on the timing. Stay tuned.

Agenda Item 3: Discussion of future project review process

Summary: Patty reviewed Northwest Power Act directives and outlined the benefits of reviews. Reviews provide clear documentation of the project's objectives and achievements and provide an opportunity for feedback and modifications. The ISRP has a set of criteria on which they base their assessments. Regional feedback on the review process over past few years includes the need to consider the different timelines and purposes for review, to consider a landscape approach, and to consider changing the review process and team structure. The Council is looking for additional input on the next review cycle. General acceptance of each project's scientific validity may lead to more efficient reviews that can address targeted issues and questions. Streamlining the process will be more work for the Council ahead of the next review but may help ease the burden on sponsors. We have areas of flexibility in the "how" of how the reviews happen.

Project review – which projects to review, Maureen: First, we must decide what to review (274 active and ongoing Council recommended projects). Second, how and why the projects may be categorized and grouped. She reviewed the objectives for reviews: an implementation check-in on project actions and address any outstanding Council conditions. Targeted questions would provide the structure for science review and Council recommendations. Projects will continue to be grouped to maximize review efficiency, with the opportunity to do this at a finer scale and be a more focused effort. Described the project mapping process to better define the type of work that projects are focused on for categorizing and grouping, for providing structure to develop

targeted questions, to consider projects with different timelines and needs for review, and to clarify which projects are amenable to science review from those that are not.

Continued Project Review – how to review, Mark: Next, we need to decide how to review. Emphasized the reasons for categorizing projects in a new way to better document process. There is flexibility in the next review to organize projects by geography and/or by the type of work implemented (i.e., project mapping purpose and emphasis areas described above). Summarized what will happen before each review formally begins, what review materialas are anticipated, and the science review process. The ISRP will review projects that are amenable to science review and provide comments and guidance to strengthen the ongoing projects for continued implementation. Additional comments and evaluation from the ISRP would be provided for the subset of projects that have outstanding Council conditions as part of past review(s). Staff are continuing to develop these general concepts and options (additional work needed to better define the review process, steps and pilot a set of projects with targeted questions). Staff are seeking feedback from the F&W managers, and then Bonneville and the ISRP in the coming months, with updates to the Council.

- Comment: This is tough to do. Past reviews have not been very helpful. We know how to write better proposals to pass Council review, have not necessarily changed the operations based on the scientific review. What would be more helpful might be a workshop style interaction with ISRP to talk about emerging/innovative ideas to better manage within this funding limited system. We don't have a lot of funding for M&E so demands to do more falls on deaf ears. People don't want to retrace steps in this program. We need meaningful interaction with the scientific community to make sure that our work is relevant and impactful.
  - o Response: Agreement that topics, such as for wildlife M&E, that is a great idea to have a workshop situation to achieve a better outcome.
- Comment: Going back to the top, remember the point that these have legal and policy sideboards. Often the scientific issues that come up with hatcheries, for example like density dependence and carrying capacity issues, are due to the existence of dams at its core.
- Comment: Is it at the May NPCC meeting that you will be seeking approval of the new approach?
  - o Response: Mark- No, it will be down the line.
- Comment: Concerned that the Council will not deal in the budgetary issues but leave that to BPA. Where are there gaps in the program? Why wouldn't the funding recommendations be considered?
  - o Response: Focus is whether the amount of funding is making it hard to reach the objectives of a certain project. That said, if the budget has been a problem in the past, then project review may be a good place to document and address that.
  - o Response: It is not that the Council is not interested, it is that we are thinking that the review process could be separate from the budget issues, but maybe we need to discuss that.
  - o Response: We need to think about Program effectiveness, not parsing out the projects and looking more closely at them.
  - o Response: It is through the reviews that the projects on the ground change. We are still about to woefully miss the goal of the program again. The knobs that we can turn are at the project level. Also curious about the scope of the projects being reviewed in the next round. As project sponsors, we are asked to do a bunch of work to justify projects

but there's a parallel program at BPA that needs to be held to the same standards of performance review.

- o Response: We do not have the opportunity to review BPA Program Support projects. This has caused some heartache in the region.
- o Response: It is on our radar but information about this work is not available to us. We do not know what projects are funded outside of our process.

- Comment: In agreement with the suggestions put forth by the Council. Suggestion to build a template early to get an idea of how to make this as streamlined as possible and give a chance for review.
  - o Response: We need to continue to work on pilot ideas and get feedback from the sponsors and Council.
  - o Response: We can start with some examples and work out rough patches/ideas before implementation.
- Comment: As someone who has been around for the duration of these review programs, we need to ask, "what is a useful outcome for this review?". There isn't a useful outcome in the way that it is structured right now. It puts programs at risk more than reward right now. The ISRP reviewers are not affiliated, but they are not all-knowing. We need to figure out how to add value in another way.
  - o Response: Before we begin this review and hand it over to the ISRP, we need to prioritize the improvements and goals. Need to ask those questions before review.
- Comment: What is the timeline?
  - o Response: We have a goal of late fall/early next year.
- Comment: Optimistic that these conversations will open up new opportunities and possibilities for future cycles. We agree not going back to square one keeps things moving forward.
- Comment: This is just the start of this feedback. Keep in touch with us if you have ideas and what types of outcomes you hope to see.

Reviewed the updated version – no comments on the rest

Agenda Item 4: Program Tracker demo and discussion of Strategy Performance Indicators
Summary: Leslie Bach introduced updates to the Program Tracker. Reviewed what is available and gave examples of the power of the Tracker. Meant to be a repository so that you can come to one place but acknowledged that some of these data also live elsewhere. It may be easier to compare data from two separate sources when it is gathered in one place. If you need the data, you are welcome to contact us but there is not a print or download option currently. Can be a tool to see how the current criterion are performing relative to Program goals, objectives and strategies. This is an important component of Performance. In the future you will be able to pull up the SPIs associated with specific program objectives.

- Comment: This looks good and it captures a lot of the ideas and concepts that we have reviewed in the past two years. This may be a good way to link project success to these indicators. Having the OPI code linked to the single SPIs seems like it would be a good place to start.
- Comment: Do you have any idea of how to synthesize these data into larger conclusions to be used for program performance overall?

- o Response: We are not necessarily going to be evaluating the individual datasets. That is the purview of the managers. We are providing these datasets as a tool that can be used to prepare for the next program amendment. We will also likely use many of the SPIs in our Program performance work going forward.
- Comment: Work with the data owners to do a few pilot runs of how data should be interpreted. Pull out a few examples of data stories and see how they may be displayed.
- Comment: How to see it visually as a map to help people navigate the data?
  - o Response: The goal was to get to the overall scale when we started. Don't want to single out smaller projects but overarching themes may emerge.
- Comment: Put a note in the biological objective to link the SPIs by project or topic.
- Comment: It would be good to have a Beta version to play with so that data is not chopped up in a misrepresentative way.
  - o Response: In terms of the way that data are displayed, it has been talked about extensively and this is where it landed for now. Individual viewers can draw their own interpretations and conclusions.
- Comment: Who is the target audience?
  - o This came out of the last addendum. There was a lot of discussion in the addendum process between managers on how to provide this data. It's meant to provide information for people to think about the program strategies.
- Comment: What happens when there is a less data rich category? In the future it would be good to list other SPIs that do not have data and say that we hope to fill it in the future.
  - o This was based on existing data, so you are correct that some are much shorter than others. We pulled in what we had, and we hope that the data will continue to grow. We could think about adding missing data categories in the future.
- Comment: When we decided to take this on, the goal was to see if the results of our strategies were helping us move toward goals. Can we see where we are missing the goals, too? We knew we would be missing/have subpar data sometimes and we hoped that this may help identify those areas.
  - o Correct, this is to help think through future questions.
  - o Over the next few council meetings, we will be discussing SPIs and presenting information about a retrospective on the Council's program.

Agenda Item 5: Update on Governors Report and future reporting discussion
Summary- Kris Homel gave an overview of the cost report and highlighted the overlap between NPCC and BPA funded projects (vast majority). There are a few differences that live outside of the Council. There was no report in 2022 which caused managers to point out that this is the only way that cost reporting happens.

- Comment: We rely heavily on this report and emphasized the importance of the master table as well as the category-by-category expense report. This is the only place that you can see Treasury Credits that BPA receives, and the process is transparent.
- Comment: The application of real dollars vs. foregone revenues that in many times gets lumped. This report is essential to understanding.

Remainder of discussion postponed to May RCF meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Discussion on flat funding
Postponed to May RCF meeting.

Agenda Item 7: Other topics if time allows

Chair Milburn – Thank you and closing remarks.

Save the Dates
Additional information coming soon:
- Meeting(s) to revisit updates on Governor's Report and discussion of flat funding
  o Likely May 2023
- Next RCF meeting
  o Anticipating Fall 2023