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Northwest Power and Conservation Council Regional Coordination Forum Notes July 11, 2024

ATTENDEES:

Art Martin - ODFW	Jen Graham - CTWSRO	Matt Boyer - MFWP
Bill Edmonds - Council staff	Joe Blodgett - YN	Maureen Hess - Council staff
Brandon Diller - KTOI	Joe Maroney - Kalispel Tribe	Mike Milburn - Council - MT
Chris Donley - WDFW	John Shurts - Council staff	Nate Jensen - KTOI
Dennis Daw - USRT	Kate Self - Council staff	Patty O'Toole - Council staff
Dianne Barton - CRITFC	Kendra Coles - Council staff	Sara Mounts - Council staff
Donella Miller - CRITFC	Kris Homel - Council staff	Scott Hauser - USRT
Doug Hatch - CRITFC	Kym Buzdygon - Council staff	Shannon Adams - YN
Elaine Harvey - CRITFC	Laura Gephart - CRITFC	Stacy Horton - Council staff
Erik Merrill - Council staff	Louie Pitt - Council - OR	Summer Goodwin - BPA
Gene Shippentower - CTUIR	Lynn DuCharme - CSKT	William Barquin - KTOI
Greg Sieglitz - NOAA	Mark Fritsch - Council staff	Windy Schoby - Council staff

Regional coordination entities present: Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, 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, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Upper Snake River Tribes, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Yakama Nation

Also: National Marine Fisheries Service, Bonneville Power Administration

Regional coordination entities not present: Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Nez Perce Tribe, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Upper Columbia United Tribes

PRESENTATION SLIDES: [linked here](#)

AGENDA:

9:00 AM PDT Welcome and Introductions	
9:15 AM - 3:00 PM Topics to discuss below (break as needed)	
Agenda Items	Estimated start time
1. Program Performance	9:15 AM
2. Program Amendment	10:15 AM
<i>Extra time for continued discussion</i>	11:15 AM
<i>Lunch Break</i>	by 12:00 PM
3. Project Review	1:00 PM
4. Funding Adequacy	2:00 PM
5. Defining Roles	2:20 PM
<i>Wrap up and next steps</i>	2:50 PM
<i>Adjourn</i>	3:00 PM

Agenda Item 1. Program Performance

Summary (Kris Homel, Kate Self): Staff update on assessing and communicating Program Performance – steps to Program Performance, [Program Retrospective](#), description and plan for upcoming categorical assessments (hydrosystem – September, artificial production - October, habitat – November), evaluation of Program goals and objectives - December, and examples to discuss (i.e., 5 million fish, wildlife mitigation status).

Discussion:

- Comment: Predation may deserve its own category.
 - Will be encompassed separately within the overarching category of Habitat.
- Comment: Defining the appropriate categories that may be driven by the Program Amendment.
 - Intent of the current categories is organization of Program information by broad themes. Will not be able to cover all aspects of the Program by end of the calendar year, but focused on the largest categories of implementation (hydrosystem, artificial production, habitat; Program adaptive management will be included in the future).
- Comment: should be able to show progress toward meeting mitigation goals for Bonneville-funded hatcheries.
 - Work in progress – intend to use information and available juvenile release data and targets summarized in the [Program Tracker Hatchery tool](#) as a resource to begin describing progress toward mitigation goals for individual production programs as part of the F&WP.
- Question: How are SPIs linked to the strategies?
 - Text shown in green displays what's available in the [Program Tracker SPI tool](#).
 - Text in black indicates SPIs that are harder to track, not as quantitative, or working to develop.
- Comment re stock status: Recommend using index stocks across the basin (including weak and healthy) to track abundances over time.

- Considering identifying a handful of stocks and then asking the group how best to proceed.
- Comment re stock status: Columbia Basin Partnership/CBC tracks 24 stocks and their abundance compared to the Partnership goals. It's important to track those 24 stocks, which would indicate progress toward the 5 million fish goal and how each component contributes to abundance.
 - It would be challenging to link Program measures to relate to individual 24 stocks.
 - Differing methodology and available data makes it challenging to compare across multiple populations. Mitigation under the F&WP is impacts from the hydrosystem, which is different from CBC's recovery and healthy/harvestable goals.
 - CBC also struggling with tracking and communication of progress. There's opportunity to collaborate to avoid duplication of efforts.
 - Staff intend to link to StreamNet's efforts that are working to compile currently.
- Comments re 5 million fish goal:
 - Discussion on clarification of the goal: inclusive of in-river and ocean harvest. Emphasis that we should not account for natural mortality outside of harvest when calculating abundance.
 - Need to consider what this goal actually means and how to improve the definition of it in the next Program amendment.
 - The "enhance" portion of the requirement under the Act is the part that Bonneville forgets. Avoiding jeopardy is not the standard that the NW Power Act was built on. Enhance means to rebuild, and we need to keep that front and center when considering the fish number and how we characterize it.
 - Reporting on these things is eye-opening. It's a full-circle learning opportunity to tackle goals, objectives, measures, and the language we use to articulate them.
 - Reminder that 5 million is supposed to be an interim goal. Let's get there, and then we can worry about the intricate details. Recommend showing relative abundance over time, including both hatchery and wild components – trends/progression toward the 5 million goal.
- Comments re ocean harvest rates:
 - If there are more fish out there, we get a higher ocean harvest rate. If it goes down, it tells us something. Maybe we don't consider that part of the 5M number but learn from it qualitatively. Harvest rates over time and return rates over time.
 - Ocean harvest is based on forecast info. We could consistently and more frequently receive reporting on trend analysis.
- Summary comment related to Wildlife assessment: Developing new SPIs for wildlife, such as land management plans. About 55% of parcels owned by BPA right now have one.

Agenda item 2. Program Amendment

Summary (Patty O'Toole, John Shurts): Staff update on overview of the Amendment process, the most recent Program and Amendment, some broader context, and timeframes – planning for **call for recommendations in January 2025**. Due to

sequencing with power planning timeline, emphasis that F&W Program timeline has little flexibility to adjust the currently estimated **recommendation due date: mid-April 2025**. Emphasis that F&W agencies and Tribes receive due weight above and beyond recommendations from the general public. Expect several upcoming Council presentations at all stages leading up to and including during the amendment process.

General Discussion:

- Question: What is the determination of 'adequate' in AEERPS?
 - None of the terms are defined in the Act, just like protection and mitigation aren't. We develop metrics for adequacy, and there are industry standards to consider. Efficient = cost effective. 'Economical' analysis is a subjective call; this requires us to consider lowest cost resources, including conservation.
 - Adequacy assessment each year, with a 5-year lookout. The high data center case would mean we're inadequate, and we're somewhat inadequate if we're meet the low end of our conservation targets. This is the work of the Power Plan. The region must determine what reliable is; some alarm bells are going off.
- Comment/question: We need to consider how we develop and organize our recommendations effectively. Are you changing the current structure of the upcoming Program?
 - We haven't decided but it will likely be a full Program rather than an addendum. Could go either way but restructuring the Program completely would be a big lift. We are striving for a framework that is organized in a scientifically logical way. It has waxed and waned between detailed and more general measures.
- Comment: Request to be part of the revision process. Cited the 2009 CBFWA example where the time was not well spent because the recommendations were not folded into the Program.
 - We could do that in an organized way or an ad-hoc way. We are spending time thinking about what is missing, what do we need, what do we spend time on during the next process. Is it worth rearranging or is it worth focusing on a few things that require our energy?
 - Re-emphasized the functional changes are the most important to capture, even more than the structure and even when total recommendations are not fully-adopted.
- Comment: Support for sub-basin plans. Recommend to not broaden things so much that make it hard for areas that still rely on sub-basin plans and don't fit into the anadromous zone. Keep the resolution, don't over-complicate.
 - We receive many recommendations from different entities with various priorities, perspectives, etc. We will focus on critical changes that provide the greatest benefit or help steer the region. We are always thinking about the Program structure and if there's a better way to organize it.
- Question: Is the ISAB review of the 2020 Addendum expected to shape the upcoming Program?

- There isn't a legal obligation in these review. It is taken into account as a resource and the region uses it as food for thought. Often, people will use it as inspiration for their recommendations.
- Question: What is the opportunity to talk about Program structure pre-launch? Time frame seems tight post.
 - The more we talk about it the better, not sure how it will look.
 - If there is interest in this, we can continue the dialogue in RCF or an ad-hoc group. Could help focus the letter/call for recommendations that will go out. The Act tells us to ask for measures and objectives. We can shape that in many ways.
- Question: Are there limitations in the F&W Program process in terms of specificity of funding and contract and administration of the projects when making recommendations?
 - There are no limits to what you can bring up. We tend to focus on the measures, things to do, etc. We do also pay attention to coordination, funding, implementation. We try to focus on the work itself but if there are major roadblocks to work being done due to funding for example, then you can bring it up in your recommendations. We need to know that but it's up to you to thread that needle in your request. ID what is not getting done specifically.

Specific discussion on structure of the Program and next steps:

Does this group want to have more discussion around the *type* of recommendations (structure of program) or more about substantive components of the Program? Are there gaps/things not happening that should be? With what we've reviewed, should we change some language around implementation and why? Do we want to get together? Do we want a small work group for brainstorming?

- Comment: With the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement, we now have a whole of government strategy approach for rebuilding salmon and steelhead. We need to think about how the Program fits into this. Covers hydrosystem, this fills in the other gaps. How do we target BPA's work to fill in the gaps in implementation. Be strategic and focused, accountability component of the 2020 addendum. Wants to make sure we're aligned as this moved forward at the US Government level.
- Comment: There has been more movement in the Upper Snake and blocked areas and we want to take advantage of this. Thinks meeting once or twice prior to the amendment launch would be helpful.
- Comment: Re-emphasized the need to look at project funding/administration reform in the next amendment process. It is not working, needs an overhaul. Is not adequate and does not meet the needs of getting mitigation on the ground currently.
- Comment: Wants time to go back and talk internally and then come back together. Definitely want to help guide the upcoming process and letter crafting.
- Comment: In 2018 the managers did get together and think about getting recommendations aligned and ready for submission. It kind of fell apart but it did help guide the 2020 addendum.

- Comment: Is October too late for this group to come back together? Helpful to have connected to a Council week. Give managers time to meet before then.
- Comment: Getting the managers together is important. Brainstorm what each group thinks program amendment potential benefits could be. Aug-Sept. Could then talk about coordinated comments. Need to confirm structure of Program before too much work goes into that.

Identified follow up steps:

- RCF members will coordinate with each other over the next couple of months.
- RCF to reach out to Council staff when ready to identify agenda and distribution list for attendees for the joint RCF and Council staff meeting - scheduled for **Thursday, October 10th** (hybrid – virtual and Portland office).

Agenda item 3. Project Review

Summary (Patty O’Toole, Maureen Hess, Erik Merrill, Mark Fritsch): Overview of updated approach to the project review process and update on planning for the Lands review (initiating September 2024). Resources: [Project Mapping of 309 current projects.](#), details for Lands review - see June 27th email notification to project managers for the F&W Program Lands review (RCF leads were included in the ‘cc line).

Discussion:

- Comment: Some of the BPA Program Support category of projects (e.g., technical services contracts) seem like they should also be included in the Council’s project review process. It seems unfair that FW projects need to compete with internal BPA contracting.
 - Our approach is to first highlight these project types, work to obtain more information on how these projects connect to the Program, and their implementation details – this will continue to be an open discussion on how best to incorporate into the review process.
- Comment: Lands projects need to be supported by adequate O&M funding. Will there be an opportunity in the review process to address funding adequacy for these projects?
 - Yes, this will be addressed through targeted questions as part of the review submission.
- Comment: The opportunity to have the ISRP review your project can be a large benefit. Is there going to be a chance go back and forth prior to review? There are things that the project sponsor might want to leverage based on feedback.
 - Good feedback – one option we could consider is to incorporate a targeted question to ask project sponsors to identify specific questions they have for the ISRP - to provide that opportunity for sponsors to gain value-added feedback and guidance on particulars of their projects.
 - The opportunity for discussion and potential site visits is part of the review process. We might be able to have targeted type discussions to test that type of process.

- Question: Regarding the request for land management plans in the upcoming Lands review – what if the plan(s) is not yet available.
 - We'll use that targeted question to ask for the status of land management plans if unavailable.
- Comment: Can we get the Lands review questions early? With new staff it might be helpful to have more time to respond.
 - The draft questions were provided to the Lands project managers (cc'ed RCF members) as an early preview in June. Staff are working to finalize the questions to be included in the September guidance. Recommend reaching out to staff in the meantime with any questions.
- Question: Our resident fish project went through review in 2020. Is it expected to go through review again soon?
 - Yes. With how we intend to group projects into smaller sets focused on type of work implemented, the order changed. With the updated approach to project review, we hope there's less of a time constraint than before. However, we will not require the same projects to be reviewed more than once in the same cycle if they fit in multiple categories.
 - We do want to make it less burdensome but be an opportunity to collect info on lands and acreage to smooth out inconsistencies in records. This is also an opportunity to provide feedback on adequacy of O&M funding for the project to meet goals and objectives.
- Comment: There needs to be a chance for the sponsor to give feedback once they see the final ISRP review before the ISRP presents them to the Council.
 - In the updated approach, rather than having formal group 'proposal' presentations to the ISRP, we intend to replace the presentations and formal written response loop between ISRP and project managers with more targeted and coordinated manager/project-specific meetings with the ISRP. That direct interaction is meant to facilitate clarification and discussion between the project manager(s) and ISRP prior to finalizing ISRP review comments. Emphasis that there is also a formal comment period after the ISRP completes its review report.
 - Follow up comment: Project managers should be able to see the ISRP review report before the release into the public sphere. Doesn't need to be as formal as before, but one last check before release would be preferred.
 - Hearing that a "preview" might be helpful before release to public comment.
- Comment: Likes the more informal back and forth prior to recommendations, but ideal to have a step wherein meaningful conversations are cultivated after the ISRP produces a report but before it goes to the Council in case there is a need for clarification. For example, ISRP sometimes recommends something that will cost a lot, but there is not currently funding available – would like an opportunity to respond to that.
- Comment: Some concern expressed that the Lands project review coincides with the Program Amendment timeline – want to avoid making folks work on both simultaneously.
- Comment: In the targeted questions, consider including a question that includes 'lessons learned' in addition to 'accomplishments.'

- Comment: Will there be guardrails for the ISRP to keep them on track with this new approach to project review?
 - Yes, the intent of the targeted questions is to provide the structure and scope for the review. Because the basic premises and scientific soundness of these existing and ongoing projects have been accepted, the ISRP review and Council recommendations will be focused on value-added comments/guidance to strengthen projects for continued implementation.
 - There may still be some projects that have outstanding Council conditions as part of its previous review that may need additional evaluation by the ISRP – clarification will occur in advance of the review regarding which project(s) this applies to.

Agenda item 4. Funding Adequacy

Continuation from 2023 RCF and small workgroup meeting – reviewed prior discussion. Request for feedback from RCF on current thinking.

- Comment: All of the previously noted concerns are still active. What we're not seeing is accountability or consistency from BPA regarding Council recommendations.
- Comment: General agreement. We need to look closer at where inflation is occurring and at what levels. Rural areas are experiencing inflation at higher levels compared to urban areas.
- Comment: Language regarding funding adequacy is already addressed in the Program and in project review recommendations. Where do folks want to go with this?
 - The Lands review will likely bring a lot of this to light. They are feeling the hardest impacts of this.
- Comment: Clarity on this issue ahead of the next amendment process would be helpful to the region.
- Question: Do we have Bonneville's response to the two questions from the review decision in 2022?
 - There was some inflationary relief, but it wasn't addressed across the board. Bonneville's SOY process can provide discussion materials around this, but we don't always have clear details.

Agenda item 5. Defining Roles

Continuation from 2023 RCF and small workgroup meeting – continued discussion.

- Comment: NOAA's effort to look into ways to improve F&W mitigation across the region popped out of the USG Commitments. The Council needs to be part of these discussions. We can pause the conversation in this forum as we work on roles within other spaces.