



July 13, 2010

Eric Loudenslager, Chair, Independent Scientific Review Panel
Nancy Huntly, Chair, Independent Scientific Advisory Board
Erik Merrill, ISAB and ISRP Coordinator

Dear Dr. Loudenslager, Dr. Huntly and Mr. Merrill,

Over a five-month period, beginning in November 2009, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (Council) prepared a draft Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Reporting (MERR) Plan. The draft MERR Plan is in response to the 2009 Columbia River Basin Fish & Wildlife Program's (Program) primary strategies for research, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The draft MERR Plan also includes policy direction provided in other parts of the 2009 Program. In March 2010, the Council released the draft MERR Plan for public comment. At the Council's request, in May 2010, the Independent Scientific Advisory Board and the Independent Scientific Review Panel provided comments to improve the MERR Plan ([ISAB/ISRP 2010-3](#)).

The March 2010 draft MERR Plan contained placeholders for three implementation strategies, one each for anadromous fish, resident fish, and wildlife. A substantial portion of the Anadromous Fish Implementation Strategy has been developed collaboratively with the region's fish and wildlife managers through a series of sub-regional and regional workshops collectively referred to as the 2009 Columbia Basin Coordinated Anadromous Monitoring Workshop¹. The outcome of this collaboration is the appended coordinated Anadromous Salmonid Monitoring Strategy (ASMS) and supporting final tables (Appendix F).

The ASMS is designed to communicate the basinwide strategic approach for meeting the monitoring and adaptive management needs of the Council's Program, ESA Recovery Plans, the Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (FCRPS BiOp), and federal, state, and tribal fish and wildlife programs in a cost-effective manner. The ASMS is a strategic approach to the monitoring of viable salmonid population criteria (VSP). The ASMS is not meant to be a comprehensive strategy for habitat or hatchery effectiveness. However, to the extent the monitoring of each of these can be informed by VSP criteria they have been incorporated especially as the criteria pertain to the FCRPS BiOp Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation (RME) actions in the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA).

¹ A regional workshop was convened by Bonneville, CBFWA, NOAA and Council during October 20-21, 2009 and November 3-5, 2009 in Skamania Washington to develop Basin Coordinated Anadromous Monitoring Strategy.

The main ASMS document does not provide a textual summary of the gap assessment or of project-level implementation of the basinwide strategy, but this information is provided in Appendix F of the ASMS. There also are several on-going endeavors in the basin and regionwide that will provide additional information that can contribute to refining the implementation of the ASMS. These include, but are not limited to, the draft AA/NOAA/NPCC BiOp RM&E Recommendations Report (May 2010)² which assesses the existing gaps and current projects related to the FCRPS BiOp RME RPA, and regional workshops addressing monitoring protocols such as those organized through PNAMP. The goal of the ASMS is to provide an efficient and effective monitoring strategy that integrates viable salmonid population criteria, as well as providing guidance to a subset of tributary habitat effectiveness and tributary hatchery effectiveness criteria related to the FCRPS BiOp RME RPA across multiple programs and geographic scales. Attaining this goal also would partially fulfill the Council's draft MERR Plan's Anadromous Fish Implementation Strategy -- specifically the VSP and related tributary effectiveness monitoring components for anadromous salmon and steelhead. Several other components of the Anadromous Fish Implementation Strategy remain to be completed, including, but not limited to, a salmon and steelhead monitoring strategy for the mainstem, estuary, and ocean and a monitoring strategy for lamprey. These components will be addressed later as the Anadromous Fish Implementation Strategy continues to be developed (this process is described in the July 2010 draft MERR Plan).

The Council, BPA, NOAA, CBFWA, and the fish and wildlife managers would appreciate the ISAB's and ISRP's review of the draft ASMS to aid in improving the document. In the review, please specifically address the following questions:

1. Do the rationales (Section 5) and specific implementation strategies (described in the appendices) represent scientifically valid approaches for meeting the policy goals articulated in the guidelines (Section 4)?
2. Does the ASMS assist the ISRP, the Council and its regional partners by providing a basinwide context or framework for understanding and linking monitoring activities for viable salmonid population parameters, as well as providing some guidance on tributary habitat effectiveness and tributary hatchery effectiveness monitoring to the extent the monitoring of each of these can be informed by VSP? Does the ASMS assist in providing the basinwide context for related projects during the Council's RME+ categorical review process? What specific suggestions can you make to improve its usefulness for this purpose?
3. Is the ASMS information presented in the best format for communicating the basinwide monitoring strategy for viable salmonid population criteria, as well as providing some guidance on tributary habitat effectiveness and tributary hatchery effectiveness monitoring to the extent the monitoring of each of these can be informed by VSP? What specific suggestions can you make for improving how the information is presented?

² AA/NOAA/NPCC BiOp RM&E Recommendations Report (May 2010) is available <http://www.salmonrecovery.gov/Files/RM&E%20Recommendations%20Report%20w%20revised%20Appendix.pdf>

4. Appendix F of the ASMS includes three tables, one each for steelhead, spring Chinook and sockeye (Tables 1, 2, and 3, respectively). These tables provide information on the list of critical projects being implemented to meet a specified strategy statement as well as identifying a prioritized list of gaps for each major population group or distinct population segment. A fourth table summarizes the basinwide funding prioritization for steelhead, Chinook, and sockeye projects. Please assess, as feasible, whether the combined information from these tables implements the ASMS guidelines.
5. What overall suggestions can you make for improving the usability and usefulness of the ASMS?

To facilitate responding to the above questions we are suggesting that the ASMS be reviewed simultaneously with the review of projects submitted in the RME+ categorical review process. We hope that this approach will aid in assessing how the ASMS is fulfilling its goal of providing a basinwide context for Program-funded projects that are conducting the monitoring of tributary viable salmonid population criteria, habitat effectiveness, and hatchery effectiveness. Please send your comments to Nancy Leonard (nleonard@nwcouncil.org) by January 14, 2011.

Thank you,

Tony Grover
Northwest Power and Conservation Council

Nancy Leonard
Northwest Power and Conservation Council

Brian Lipscomb
Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority

Jim Geiselman
Bonneville Power Administration

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