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August 7, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish and Wildlife Committee Members

FROM: Staff

SUBJECT: Updated Discussion on policy issues emerging from Bonneville budget adjustments

Presenter: Tony Grover, NPCC, and Bryan Mercier, Bonneville Power Administration

Summary: Below are potential reductions that have been made known to staff as currently under discussion by Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville). The list describes these funding reductions with a short staff assessment of the potential policy issues or effects of the funding reductions. Bonneville will report to the Council as reductions are confirmed, with an initial set of reductions being reported as soon as August. It is likely that additional policy issues will arise once a full understanding of the reductions and rationale for these reductions are known

Newly identified proposed reductions

The following proposed reductions are understood to be under discussion:

- Proposed 50% reduction in funding for the Columbia Basin Bulletin for 2019 and proposed to be eliminated for 2020. The 2018 Budget for the Bulletin is \$148,412 the amount recommended by the Council. Bonneville recommends the Bulletin be published monthly instead of weekly for 2019. **Potential policy issue:** The

Bulletin is an electronic newsletter distributed to over 10,000 people, “*servicing since 1998 those interested in (U.S. Northwest) Columbia River Basin salmon and steelhead recovery and other regional natural resource/energy issues.*” This project was most recently reviewed and recommended by the Council in 2013. Funding reductions have the potential to weaken implementation of the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Programs’ Adaptive Management Strategy and the Public Engagement Strategy described on page 99 of the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program.

- Proposed program-wide 50% reduction in funding in FY2019 and elimination in FY2020 for Bonneville funded conferences. **Potential policy issues:** Funding reductions have the potential to weaken implementation of the 2014 Fish and Wildlife Programs’ Adaptive Management Strategy and the Public Engagement Strategy. The Council’s comprehensive review of research, monitoring and evaluation in 2012 identified as a significant issue, the need to support obtaining, organizing, synthesizing, evaluating and reporting on implementation and biological results for the Program. Also, the proposed reduction may take time to apply equitably throughout the Columbia basin because some conferences may not be identified as a line item in entity budgets.
- Beginning in FY 2018 Bonneville reduced travel and registration fees for conference attendance by project sponsors. **Potential effect:** Reduced ability to support the 2014 Program Adaptive Management Strategy and the Public Engagement Strategy Principle: “*Support and champion organizations that effectively support productive partnerships among relevant sciences, between science, management and the public...*”

Updates on previously identified reductions

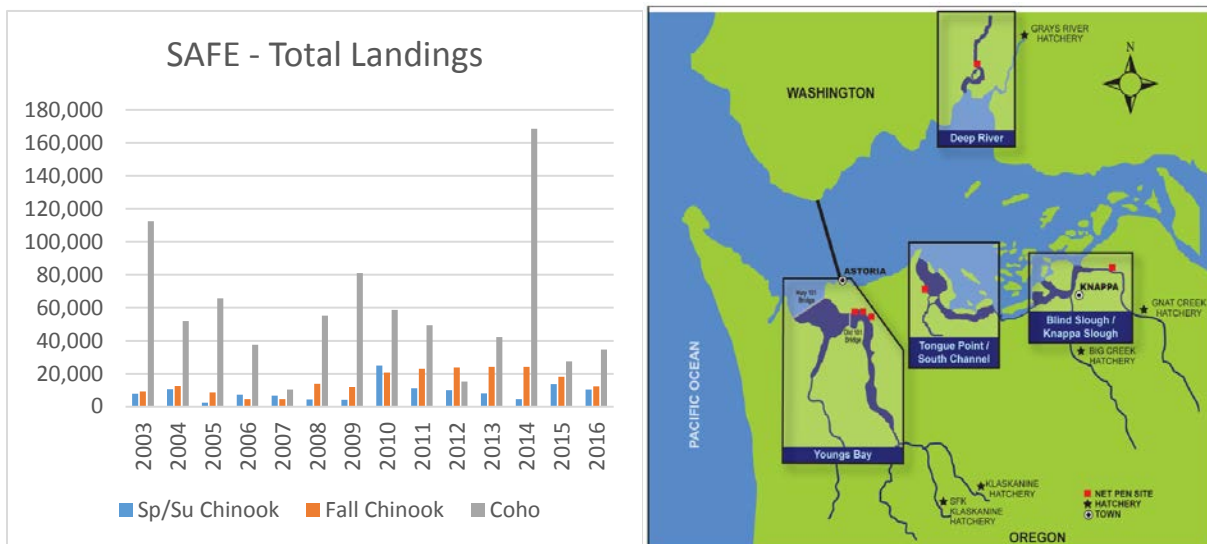
Previously identified potential reductions, updated with additional detail in some cases, first discussed with the Committee in June 2018, which appear to still be under discussion:

- Reductions in funding for technical assistance functions of some umbrella projects, and estuary habitat work. **Potential policy issue:** Need to verify if these reductions will inhibit development and implementation of program habitat work including in the estuary.
- Reduce Water Transaction Program funds by \$1 million. **Potential policy issue:** Water acquisitions have been an important feature of the Fish and Wildlife Program since 2000. The Council has supported implementation of this project since 2002, and most recently recommended this project in 2012. The 2014 Program’s Habitat Strategy specifically calls for “improving the amount, timing and duration of instream flows through water rights and acquisitions”. It is not clear where and how the \$1 million reduction would be implemented. It is important that funds are not focused solely on FCRPS BiOp purposes, that ISRP reviewed criteria continue to be applied consistently across the basin, and administrative changes in the water transaction program at the contractor or qualified local entities (QLE) level do not impede

transactions. Bonneville reports the cost reductions will be primarily administrative, resulting from consolidation of multiple programs into a single program.

- Reduce StreamNet funding by \$82,512 and reduce funding to other data management efforts. **Potential policy issue:** Important to support the program’s Adaptive Management Strategy. Recent programs recognized the importance of coordinating and integrating program data while noting needed improvement in these areas. StreamNet partners have described the impacts on data flow and, in some cases where partner funding is already at a minimal level, how these reductions result in partners being unable to contribute priority data, such as natural origin spawner abundance.
- Elimination of Select Area Fisheries Enhancement (SAFE) funding over 3 years, which Bonneville currently budgets at \$1,908,145 per year. **Potential policy issue:** The Council, in 1992 recognized in its Fish and Wildlife Program, the need for terminal fisheries to reduce mainstem impacts on depressed upstream salmon runs. This Project was first recommended by the Council in 1993. The 2014 Program’s Investment Strategy on Page 115 states: “**Bonneville will continue to provide adequate support for terminal fisheries in the estuary and other basin locations.**” The NPCC recommendation to BPA in 2011 was to “**Implement through FY 2016. Consistent with the original intent of this project this project will work toward being self-sustaining by 2017.**”

The SAFE project provides mitigation for lost harvest opportunities in the lower river. Between 2003 and 2016 well over one million Chinook and Coho produced through the SAFE project were commercially harvested in the off-channel areas of the lower Columbia River. The graph below illustrates the landings of SAFE fish from 2003 through 2016¹ and the map shows where SAFE is implemented.



Figures: *SAFE landings and areas of activity.*

¹ Select Area Fishery Enhancement Project, Fiscal Year 2013-2016 Report, October, 2017.

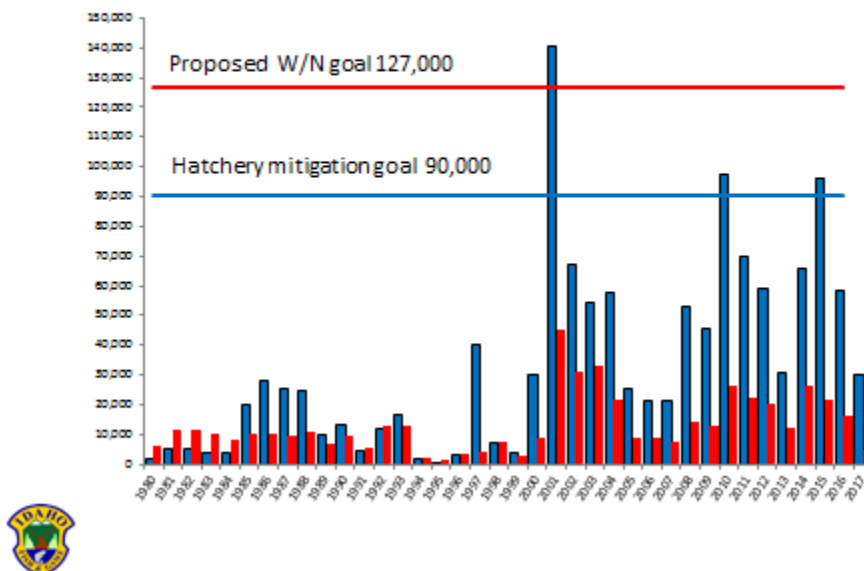
- Reduce Lower Snake River Compensation Plan (LSRCP) funding by about \$2.3 million dollars. **Potential effect:** Bonneville reports minimal effects as budgeted funds exceeded expenditures for several years.

Measured adult fish returns resulting from LSRCP production are combined with Idaho Power’s production and presented together. The goals are:

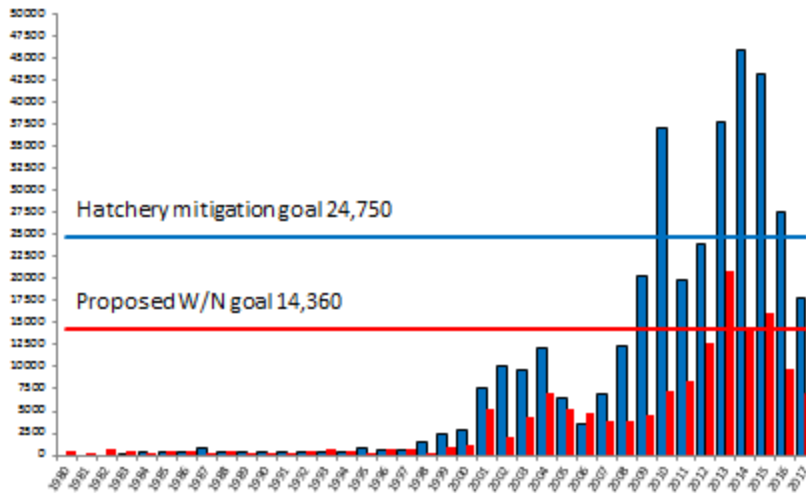
Snake River goals	LSRCP goals	Total goals (with IPC)
Spring/Summer Chinook	58,700 (Sp Chinook)	90,000
Fall Chinook	18,300	24,750
steelhead	55,100	88,100

The graphs below show Snake River wild/natural goals and returns in red and hatchery goals and returns in blue, which have been met or exceeded in most recent years for Fall Chinook and steelhead.

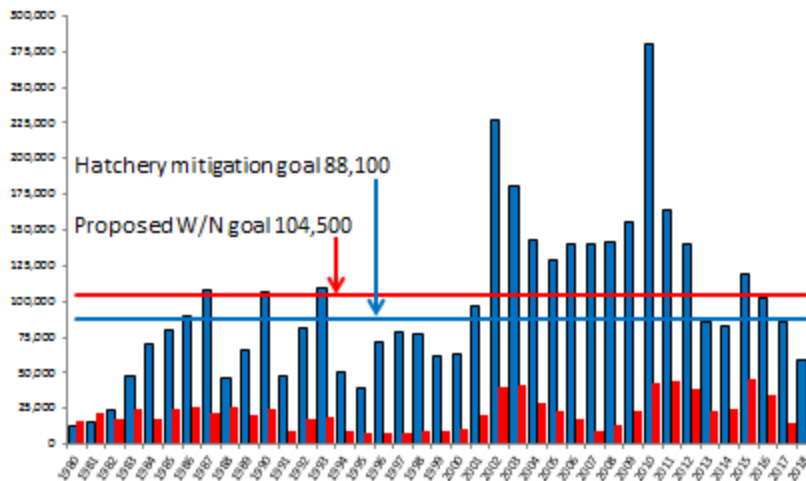
Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon



Fall Chinook Salmon



Summer Steelhead



- Permanently eliminate most funding for the CHaMP and ISEMP projects. These projects were funded at just over \$7,000,000 in FY 2017 and budgets were first reduced in FY 2018 with the goal of contracting these projects for about \$1,500,000 in FY 2019. **Potential effect:** Impacts existing program-funded research, monitoring, and evaluation efforts. The Council, in its reviews of research, monitoring and evaluation projects, and in its fish and wildlife programs, has often noted the need to adequately monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of program habitat actions.

- Budget adjustments with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. **Potential effect:** Little to no anticipated negative effect to the benefits to fish associated with this work.

Relevance: The [2014 Fish and Wildlife Program](#) strategy for public engagement states: *On an ongoing basis, the Council will educate and involve Northwest citizens to develop, implement, and improve understanding of the fish and wildlife program and the Council, and to promote successful ecosystem management.* Included in the rationale for this strategy is the notion that *public involvement and understanding will ensure management decisions are more sustainable.*

The purpose of gathering this information is to transparently share with the F&W Committee and the region the effects of Bonneville Fish and Wildlife direct Program budget reductions on Program policies and implementation as they become known. This will likely become a standing agenda item for the Fish and Wildlife Committee for the next eight or so months. Staff will continue to work with project sponsors and Bonneville staff to gather and compose this information into a form that will be useful and clear to the Council members and the public.

Background: Bonneville's January [2018 Strategic Plan](#) sets an objective to *"Hold the sum of program costs, by business line, at or below the rate of inflation through 2028."* This objective is further elaborated in the Strategic Plan: *"In addition, because fish and wildlife costs make up a significant portion of power costs, this strategic goal includes taking a more disciplined approach to managing the total cost of our Fish and Wildlife Program."* And more specifically: *"To make the most of available funds, investments in fish and wildlife protection, mitigation and enhancement will be prioritized based on biological and cost-effectiveness and their connection to mitigating for impacts of the FCRPS."*

At the May 2018 Council meeting, Bonneville's administrator and senior managers identified a total of about \$30 million, but the cost reductions are very much a work in progress, and Bonneville hopes to receive a lot of advice and assistance as it makes contract decisions that lead to a reduced budget to implement the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program for Fiscal Year 2019, which begins October 1 of this year.

More Info:

- Council's [Fish and Wildlife Program](#)
- Bonneville [2018-2023 Strategic Plan](#)
- Description of the [Columbia Basin Bulletin project](#)
- 2017 [Umbrella Project Review](#)
- Columbia basin [Water Transactions Program](#) project description and funding history (project # [2002-01-301](#))
- Final notes from the June 14, 2018 [StreamNet Executive Committee Meeting](#) and [StreamNet Budget Reduction Proposal to BPA](#)
- Select Area Fisheries Enhancement project description and funding history (project # [1993-060-00](#))
- ISRP 2014 Review of the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan ([ISRP 2014-6](#)) and USFWS background information [website](#)

- View project description and funding history of the CHaMP (Project # [2011-006-00](#)) and ISEMP (project # [2003-017-00](#)) programs. Also, see staff [June 6, 2017 memo](#) summarizing Council recommendations and information about CHaMP and ISEMP programs.
- Kootenai Tribe of Idaho fish and wildlife projects [website](#) and individual Bonneville funded projects ([2002-011-00](#); [2002-008-00](#); [2002-002-00](#); [1994-049-00](#); [1988-064-00](#))