

**Columbia River Regional Forum  
System Configuration Team Meeting  
September 15, 2022  
Final Official Notes**

Representatives of Corps, OR, WA, BPA, NOAA, and others participated in today's SCT meeting facilitated by Blane Bellerud, NOAA. Draft and final SCT notes are available on the COE's TMT website under the FPOM link. For copies of documents discussed in the meeting, contact [kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov). See the last page of these minutes for a list of attendees.

- All SCT business finished up by 10:00 am, there was a presentation on PIT tag technology and future strategies for PIT tag detection from the NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science center.

**1. Budget updates – *Ida Royer, Corps of Engineers***

Royer reported that it is fifteen days to the end of the fiscal year. They are wrapping up the financials for 2022 and are looking toward the 2023 budget. She sent out the most recent spreadsheet via email, "CRFM FY22 SCT Ranking Spreadsheet". It shows the most recent allocations, these can still shift as things are balanced – labor needs to be covered.

As a 2023 recap, Royer shared that they are still looking at a continuing resolution to start the 2023 fiscal year. Which means they are initially reliant on the President's budget. The good news is that the President's budget is about ten times the amount provided last year, \$29.175 MM dollars for FY23. The bad news is this is not enough to cover everything.

They are waiting for Congress to pass the budget to provide the final budget and there are chances that CRFM may get a plus up (this will help to cover all of the needs we have) but there are no earmarks identified for CRFM as of yet.

Once they know what the final budget is, there are also opportunities to put in work plan requests for additional funding. She cannot give the final budget at this time but this is what is happening at this moment. They also have a meeting with Division toward the end of the month to set up their funds and plan for FY23.

Questions:

Charlie Morrill, WDFW, asked if the Corps leadership expect any action made by Congress prior the upcoming fall election on the budget. He asked if they are getting a sense of any urgency in Congress to make the vote.

Royer said she is not sure, that she had hear whispers about a month ago. Not sure how long it will last. If she finds out, she will pass it along.

Royer continued her update with an initial draft of language to explain “Mandatory Criteria” for the budget rankings. She wanted to start a conversation for the group.

1. Any ongoing construction project (i.e., contract has already been awarded) that requires construction contract oversight to ensure the work gets completed to specifications and requirements.

For example: Lower Granite Slope Stabilization Contract has been awarded this year. Next year they would need to oversee the contract to make sure that their safety requirements are upheld.

2. Any project supplying resources to maintain the CRFM Program (programmatic accounts – which will be going away after FY23).

For example: Funds labor for staffing to get keep the program up and running.

Note: This is temporary criteria; the expenses will be supplied directly by projects after FY24.

3. Any expenses directly tied to litigation.

Questions:

Bellerud asked about how what is discussed as BiOp or other agreements should be considered.

Royer explained that everything in the budget line items is a BiOp requirement. It is difficult to parse. Their thought is to rank those items a five and then prioritize it in a budget shortage, i.e., check for priorities and whether it can be shifted a year without significant impacts.

Bellerud requested another category be considered, i.e., R “required”.

Erick Van Dyke, ODFW, asked for clarity of whether oversight =/= CRFM program.

Royer explained the differences between options 1 and 2. Option 1 includes ongoing construction oversight; support for the project. Option 2 is linked to the programmatic accounts; support for the program.

Royer reiterated that this is a draft and it can be an ongoing discussion. She will send out a copy for SCT to think about as a starting point.

Morrill asked for examples for each case to provide a clearer idea of what the differences are.

Royer provided the following examples:

- 1: Project – Construction contracts have been awarded for the projects, “Bonneville Powerhouse 2 Fish Guidance Efficiency”, “Ice Harbor Turbine Passage Survival Program” and “Lower Granite Juvenile Bypass Facility”. They currently have people working at the projects with active construction/studies and they need to have someone provide oversight to make sure they stay to code.
- 2: Programmatic – Internal labor for staff, financials, budget allocation for the projects, “FCRPS CRFM Program Management (NWP)”. Supports the accounting and keeps the programs moving.

Jonathan Ebel, IDFG, asked if there is an upper limit to the percentage of the budget that can be used for litigation expenses. He does not believe that they should be using mitigation money to defend the failure to mitigate.

Royer responded that there is no upper limit but it usually only includes labor. It is not usually a large amount of expense but it is not easily predicted.

Ebel asked if the money is for in-house labor (i.e., finding documents for DOJ) or is it something that the Corps needs to transfer to another department.

Royer responded that it is often in-house labor but can also be in the form of contracts for outside contractors to help with the organization for litigation. In the case of CRSO, she is not sure how they are allocating the money exactly they have requested the amount to cover their needs and she awards it as necessary.

Van Dyke asked if this a newer policy or the procedure used in the past.

Royer responded that is something that has always been part of the budget, but it may not always been called out directly. It is the labor tied to litigation and part of the program. It is mostly biologists and people's labor tied to litigation.

Royer will share the document and will have more discussion moving forward as thoughts come up.

## **2. Other items as needed**

Morrill asked if SCT should do face to face meeting for October, he offered a space in his WDF conference room.

Bellerud will also look into the requirements at NOAA's conference rooms. He did note that the conference rooms make it more difficult to communicate because not everyone is miked as they are on WebEx.

## **3. PIT Tag Presentation Questions**

Bellerud will provide any of the available presentation materials to the group.

Steve Smith presented a history of PIT detection and an explanation of standard errors.

Tom Lorz, CRITFC, asked if they are able to use the same tools used at Bonneville (sources like the PIT tag detections on avian islands, PIT trawl, etc.) to backfill when they estimate down to McNary. He also asked if this is not done whether it can be considered.

Smith responded that any detection past McNary is included in the dataset. The CJS model is pooling every detection site down from McNary to get that estimate. That will include anything downstream, like John Day or Bonneville. They have not used the interior islands but they could.

Morrill asked if there is an idea of what level in detection at McNary to get back to prior detections levels or what can be done to get back to those levels of detection.

Smith gave an example of the detection rates of 2015 with 15-20% fish passing and currently (2022) we are at 2-5%. There is a big gap in detection rate.

Morrill said that the 15-20% fish passing should be viewed as a target rating for McNary moving forward.

Smith said that is reasonable but he does not believe that there is a way to get detections up to that rate with the level of spill now.

Trevor Conder, NOAA, asked whether the standard errors have gotten worse for McNary to Bonneville as it has for those shown in the slideshow.

Smith chose not to add McNary to Bonneville to the graph because the standard errors from McNary to Bonneville and the standard errors from Lower Granite to Bonneville are highly correlated. The trends look the same. McNary to Bonneville trend is shifted up by .02 when compared to Lower Granite to Bonneville.

Van Dyke asked (referencing the third slide) about the issues with being able to see where the pile dike starts in the series. He asked if is cataloged when the pile dike began use.

Smith responded that some experimentation might have been done prior to 2012. Pile Dike 7 was wired up in 2012 and it was the first year they collected data. Most of those years Snake River chinook detected on Pile Dike 7 were less than 100. Pile Dike 6, in 2022, counted well over 1000 chinook.

Van Dyke whether the influx of new sources affects the view of the whole picture. He asked whether Smith is concerned with the adding vectors that they are less able to explain.

Smith responded that it touches on technical aspects of the CJS model. The CJS model is formulated to lump data. The flip side is that the ability to test assumptions of the model diminished as they move downstream. The last couple of reaches there is less data available. In testing Little Goose, they are able to use accumulation of data and they can use detections to compare fish. However, when they reach the end of line there is no more opportunity because of the end of the data. In particular, the thing to look at is they are taking various sources to make the “sample” downstream of Bonneville and presumably not all sources are sampling the same way. They would like them to be representative of all fish but it is likely that they are not, in past years they have done comparisons of trawl versus birds. They go back to that, they might see differences, but not they are not sure which is sampling is the right way. By pooling, if there are errors, they should average out. It would not make a lot of difference in the survival estimates to model in a way that split the sources to Bonneville, it would just another way to do averaging.

Ebel asked in regards to Smith's Pile Dike 6 comment, if they plan to look at distribution of the detections of the diversity of stocks across of the Snake, as in whether the is a dominance of a certain group.

Smith does not have the answer and feels that they should look at those details in the future.

Ebel believes that this is a critical question moving forward.

Gabe Brooks gave his presentation for the Science Center.

Van Dyke asked for clarity, Brooks had showed a table with alternatives and some of them were removed. He wanted to know whether they have already been parsed out.

Brooks confirmed that they were parsed. He will provide Bellerud with the "Juvenile PIT Tag Prototype" report (Corps), which includes all of the alternatives that have been discussed. It is a thorough report that looked at the most likely candidates for detection.

Morrill asked Brooks what was meant in terms of time by "long term" at McNary.

Brooks said that the timeline is based on current funding. The focus is on the most return for money available. There are no current technological limitations, just financial limitations. They have discussed with Don Warf, Pacific States, and Biomark and they feel that the best approach would be the smaller scale and less expensive approach, like cap antennas, before going for the more expensive.

Morrill believes that both sites are important.

Ebel asked Brooks about the slide referencing the effort on the trawl. He believes that it would be telling to turn the data into a figure with the effort on the x-axis and the percent of Bonneville detection collected on a trawl as the y-axis. He sees that the effort on the trawl has decreased over the last ten years. He asked if there is a reason that the effort on the trawl peaked in 2007 and then declined.

Brooks explained that he did look at the correlation coefficients between efforts and total release. They can sample from April 1 to December 31 and get the effort up but they cut off sampling with the trawl when they are sampling and are not getting returns. The correlation aligns with the number of fish in the system and the outflow of the Columbia for the year.

Ebel said that he wants to look at how to best use the tools that they currently have. He asked whether there is an interaction in the effort put into the trawl versus the effort made for the flexible array. The concern is that by using the array would then decrease the use of the trawl.

Brooks explained that when they are funded for the trawl they put the trawl at top priority. The trawl goes into intensive monitoring as soon as fish numbers pick up and stays that way. They do not pull from the trawl project to run the flexible array. They are only funded to run five days a week. They have used R&D funding for flexible array testing and can only do during certain times due to the financing. Flex has not cut into trawl.

Ebel wants to increase the effort combined wants to see if there is an R&D effort for flexible array.

Brooks said that flexible array is still in the development but are still looking for funding. They are also looking for funding available for pile dikes. Depending of the funding they may be looking to a future with less reliance on trawl.

Morrill asked about the pile dikes that are degrading and about whether there is an option to replace broken piles at the pile dikes.

Gabe believes there is but will defer to Sandy.

Sandy said that Scott Hect indicated that the Corps, as part of the dredging project, is examining where the pile sites are and where improvements should be made.

Jacob MacDonald asked when will the pile dike antenna and flex array would be an operational integral part of the estuary detection system and no longer in R&D.

Brooks said that for the pile dike sites next year. They have had PD7 working from 2011 and learned PD6 over the last year. With two additional sites, they will be leaving the realm of R&D now. Going forward focus will be going to pile dikes but funding will not come from R&D.

Morrill asked MacDonald about whether the SCT and the Corps needs to be adding this too the budget as they are working of FY25.

MacDonald does not have a response but would also like to know.

Sandy does not know what the future holds down in the “lower 12” but for the near future they will continue to run with the three systems and she hopes to learn a lot. What they learn will be the basis moving forward.

Morrill wants to remind Sandy that funding is two years out.

Sandy believes that the three systems can run on their current funding from the Corps and BPA. Moving forward they will need to look into the funding to reach the 5% that is desired.

Lorz asked if whether there is a breakout of the chinook numbers, i.e. spring, fall, subyearling.

Matt Morris the vast majority in the table are spring/summer chinook. The barge flip and the numbers shown after are fall chinook.

Morrill asked if the pile dikes would still be operated through September for fall subyearling chinook. He is not sure that there are pit tags on the fall subyearling chinook but he would like to know if there is at least the option moving forward.

Sandy said that they will not be running flexible array but the pile dikes will cost less to operate. They need to monitor costs to keep operational.

Brooks said that intent is to remove the equipment at the end of the season but they may, as a pilot, look at leaving one out for a season to see if they do a good job of detecting them. Due to their lack of funding, it means they need to be careful with the equipment.

Ebel, in reference to Sandy’s comment about leaning toward pile dikes over array, wants to caution that the steelhead need to have salwak detection and would like to make sure that it is not something that can be stopped.

Sandy responded that they are definitely thinking of them in tandem and she was instead addressing Morrill’s request to keep them going after the season. During the spring and summer that, with the bias, they need to keep the detection going

Conder said that it appears that the highest priority is downstream of Bonneville. Getting the prototype in is important. He asked Brooks whether the PIT Barge could be providing useful to be used at McNary. He is curious if it can be used to locate potential future locations.

Brooks believes that the thin barge is available, it has been sitting since the 2020 Bonneville detections and it could be a good to use for feeling out locations, but it comes down to financials. The barge is available if funding is available.

Morrill asked what kind of funding would be required to use the barge.

Brooks said that he would be only guessing but he knows that West Fork wants to put it somewhere. In 2021, it was \$40K to move it up with spud barge and anchor. There would also be the cost to lease and the cost to move. If there is interest, he could figure out.

Morrill said to continue but should be used in conversations in the future. Some research should be made into whether the region would find a benefit.

Conder said that it is a matter of funding and whether they are able to convince others to finance it. There is good reason to continue talking about it.

**Today's Attendees:**

<u>Attendee</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Blane Bellerud	NOAA
Charles Morrill	WDFW
Claire McGrath	Bureau of Reclamation
Ben Hausemann	BPA
Erick Van Dyke	ODFW
Ida Royer	Corps of Engineers
Jonathan Ebel	IDFG
Kelsey Swieca	NOAA
Leah Sullivan	BPA
Leslie Bach	NPPC
Sean Tackley	Corps of Engineers
Shane Scott	PPC
Tom Lorz	Umatilla/CRITFC
Trevor Conder	NOAA
Kris Homel	NPCC
Andrea Ausmus	BPA – CorSource Notetaker

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