

Columbia River Regional Forum
System Configuration Team Meeting
February 20, 2025
DRAFT Official Notes

Representatives of Corps, ODFW, WDFW, BPA, NOAA, and others participated in today's SCT hybrid meeting facilitated by Chris Magel (in place of Trevor Conder) and hosted via Microsoft Teams.

Draft and final SCT notes are available on the COE's TMT website under the FPOM link. See the final page of these minutes for the list of attendees of today's meeting.

1. FY26 Update and Spreadsheet – Royer

- There was a decision on the reallocation. We are not able to allocate within the CRFM program outside of the President's Budget. We are being held to the PBud amounts.
- PBud for the Columbia had four projects in it:
 - PIT Trawl and scanning for tags on East Sand Island (\$1 M)
 - Three Walla Walla Projects; MCN Fish Ladder Cooling, MCN Pit Detection, and LMN Adult Ladder Cooling.
 - When the Corps submitted the budget Walla Walla had submitted construction funds.
 - They are not at that stage so we will be continuing Design and will be looking at anything that we can do to advance those Designs considering those are the projects that have been funded.
 - They are still looking to see what levers can be pulled to accelerate project schedules but it is unrealistic to expect them to get to Construction.
- Carry-In
 - There was a little Carry-in.
 - \$6M for the supplemental EIS.
 - This has been communicated vertically, and Royer is not able to utilize those funds for other efforts right now.
 - There are ongoing conversations on the status of the project and Royer is not involved in them so she likely would not have any answers.

- There was other carry-in of \$1M.
- For all else not funded in the PBud there are ongoing contracts in the Willamette and the Columbia, Royer is utilizing that carry-in for those efforts.
 - Spread thin and they are currently underfunded for the oversight.
- Place in the Budget Process
 - The President's Budget is not the final budget.
 - We are being held to it in a Continuing Resolution (CR).
 - The CR extends into late January 2026 and at that time Congress can either pass a budget or extend a CR further.
 - When Congress passes a budget there is an opportunity for Congress to add earmarks. Royer said that it was her understanding that there was an earmark specific for the Columbia proposed in the Senate. That has to then make it to conference, and they need to pass a bill before they can receive that funding.
 - Last year they did not pass an appropriation bill, they passed a year-long CR and no earmarks were passed. Royer hopes this would not happen this year.

Tom Iverson, Yakama Nation Fisheries, asked Royer how the Corps' Operation and Maintenance (O&M) budget look like for this year. He asked if we were going to be able to cover any other needs for CRFM through that.

Royer said that she does not track O&M budget, CRFM takes up most of her time. She said that as far as projects that are in CRFM they are in CRFM, they cannot move projects across programs. She said that there is no opportunity to do the finger painting of funds, it is very regimented. She said that she did know for the O&M budget, that there is routine and non-routine and there are some earmarks out there for some O&M stuff. Royer said that she did not know what they were, but they are waiting to hear on some of that as well.

Chris Magel, NOAA, said in looking at the minutes from the last meeting he remembered this conversation. He said that in those projects, Royer brought up again, there are scores and priorities for MCN and LMN ladder cooling but there are other projects with ladder cooling as well. He said in the notes there were questions about why the two were chosen and not the four. He said there was also questions about whether more details would be provided. He said that there probably were meetings that happened between then and now, he asked if she could provide any more information about that. He apologized if it were a sore subject.

Royer said that decision was made by the Administration and she is not always privy to their rationale. She said that the Corps does provide their rankings and she does look at the SCT spreadsheet when providing those rankings, so she believed that they track pretty closely to the priorities discussed in SCT. She said that at some point they need to make a decision about how much and where it goes. They do not share their rationale.

Magel asked if when Royer said Administration if she meant Washington DC, White House.

Royer nodded agreement. She said that the President's Budget comes from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and they are the ones that release it. She said that there is probably a lot that happens above her head.

Erick Van Dyke, ODFW, asked if Royer was going to send out the spreadsheet update.

Royer said that she could send it out again but there was no update. She said that she would send it so that he would have it at the top of his email.

Magel stated that the \$12M that we are working with is completely tied up in those four projects. He confirmed that there was going to be no way within all of the other projects piecing out things like the design phase or working through small pieces of projects. He asked if everything was covered with what we have and there was no way to like pull pieces of projects to make progression on a variety of other things.

Royer said that was correct.

Ben Hausmann, BPA, asked if there was any way for anything be added to the scope of those, for example if there were two projects with cooling water and we are going scoping in general. He asked if there was any chance of overlap, if you are looking at a bubbler or a pump system if it could be applied somewhere else. He asked if there was any chance to using those dollars in a broader sense.

Royer said each project has a defined scope. If it is not funded you have to assume that it was not supported, and you do not want to countermand that. She said that each one of these is an asset and they track each one separately in the financial system. They cannot work on IHR when they are working on LMN. In that way they are very separate. She said that if there are efficiencies to be gained, for example you are doing a design in one place and you can extrapolate that to another place, certainly you can utilize that to answer questions that would benefit both. You have to be a little careful when you do that.

Hausmann said that he understood. He said that he realized that you cannot have unlimited scope but asked if there was any chance of for example, if there was a benefit to the cooling water structure by adding PIT detection at a location to be able to monitor the success or the lack thereof the cooling water. He asked if that was something. He said say you are going to put something in at LMN and we cannot evaluate the cooling water structure there. He asked if those could be used to monitor that. He asked if that was possible.

Royer said that if that information was necessary to design or construct the structure then you could include it in the scope, but it needs to apply.

Royer said that the review was brief, but it was stark and there was not much to say.

2. September Minutes

- Magel asked for any additional comments/edits on the September 18 SCT Minutes.
- Minutes were approved.

3. Discuss Future Priorities

Magel said at this meeting the meeting would be pretty short. He asked if there was any interest in looking at the tea leaves of impending future priorities or things to stick in Royer's ears. He said that it is barebones for next year but asked how far in advance do we want to talk about future priorities and other. He asked if there was anything that SCT needed to air around the Festivus. He said as Royer said it seemed pretty bleak, things are falling apart and we have project priorities and with the limited funded being provided, things are going to be difficult, unfortunately. He said that we had talked about this at previous meetings as well, if and when the earmarks come ahead and we do get extra funds, how would they be allocated. He asked if we should start talking about a secondary scoring or having to rescore things. If funds do become available, pie in the sky, what would be the priorities be in terms of getting things implemented.

Royer said that she suggested that we would not know at the January meeting. They usually wait until right under the wire to pass a budget. She said that she thought February would be a good time frame, we might have more information about whether an earmark is a go or no go. She said that we could talk about what that means at that point.

Magel asked if it would be worth having a top three from those on the phone call. He said that we could start compiling a top three or top five list. He said that obviously this would be with the money in hand. He said to think about this in terms of priorities of what you would like to have things looked at or funded. He said that might be a way to look for overlap. Scoring can be difficult to clarify everyone's priorities.

Ebel said that we have talked about this in the past and generally the priorities listed on the sheet. You can cross off the ones that are moving forward and reprioritize without those on the list. He said that this is not the first go around with this situation and he was thinking more in the next meeting having the multiyear wish list being better hashed out or prioritized being his priority than trying to pick up the pieces for FY26.

Royer said that she would be submitting the FY28 Budget in January. She said that if there were things that were not on the SCT sheet that members felt should be there, that would be the opportunity to look at those. She said that a proposed project may not be a CRFM item, it may be O&M but we would still be able to have an opportunity to put it into whatever budget was appropriate if it is not currently budgeted for. She said that would be a good focus for the January meeting, trying to look out a bit.

Van Dyke asked Royer was using the list that the regional coordination in the last couple of years had generated to understand the kinds of projects that are important to the region at this point. He said as Royer had suggested and we all understand that often she started two years ahead of time. He said often this process is after that. He asked if she was already using the list that the region provided a couple years back about priority projects and interest for fish passage.

Royer described the order and timing of things. She said that she put in a budget that utilizes projects that have already been identified ahead of time. She often times, most of the projects that we talk about have some sort of tail on them. She said that they try to continue to fund things. She said that there are a number of projects that are not funded so she would budget for those again. She said that she is using the SCT sheet as her basis for the outyear budget and adding in things that the Corps had identified. She said at the January meeting she could add things that the region had identified, we could discuss budget for those. She said that was the first piece. She said that she does use SCT conversations and rankings to help her understand priorities. She said that the Corps puts in what they suggest a ranking should be, that is done at Royer's level and then it goes up and is ranked across the nation. Royer wanted to note that she is competing for funds with other programs nationally. She said that we also do a ranking process because

historically in the program we are able to reallocate (this year has been a little unusual). Those rankings also help prioritize where funding would go in cases where we would reallocate. We are just not able to do that this year.

Van Dyke said he was not sure, maybe it was the way that he presented the question, why she went there but thinking about what Ebel had said, understanding what was already in her view helps us know what we make sure to provide to her as a list, if that was really what she wanted from us. He said that he understood what she was saying, She was talking about the different sectors or blocks of activity and who does what. He said that this group was not linked into the last topic that Royer tried to get to, which was to give us some ideas that are important to the region as much as responding to what we do at SCT. He said that he wanted to make clear about all of the things that the region might want to make sure to provide for Royer, so she has it. He said ultimately if she did not have the list that the region had put together over the last four to five years, he wanted to make sure those are inserted into her view so she knew it was there if it had not already.

Royer asked if he meant the Fish Asset List and she was tracking that.

Van Dyke said that he was. He said that Royer had brought up the O&M. He said that he was talking about the non-routine list. They have spent a great deal of time and focus on those to prioritize already. He said knowing that those lists are in her view we do not need to take a whole lot of time to resend those to her. If there are new ideas that are not on those lists, that might be important. He said that he was trying to figure out how to parse down what Royer wanted from this group.

Royer said that they are tracking that list and they are discussing and pulling things in as appropriate. She said that not all of that will qualify as CRFM. She said that they have pulled in a few and are tracking that. She said that they also do not want to budget for more work than can be accomplished. She said that was a factor that they think about as we snowplow the suite of projects and we are unable to hire. She said that it was unlikely to change. She said that was another variable that she was thinking through, it was not something she was sure of how it would apply, she just wanted to make a note of it.

Ebel said that at the beginning of Van Dyke's explanation it would go one way, but it ended up somewhere different. He said that something that would be helpful in prep would be if we had something like a list of high priority projects and a justification of why. He said it would be helpful to know what was already on her FY28 list. He said that was so that there was no wasted effort. If something is already front and center, we would not waste time justifying. He asked if the

Corps already had a list of what the Corps thinks of as high priority, what the Corps thinks is mandatory or a list that was going to fill the expected funding allocation. Ebel said that type of funding information would be helpful. He said that he knew that it might not be possible for Royer to share that.

Royer said that she would ask about what she was able to share. She said that it has changed this year, and she would see what she could do. She said that she understands the ask, to see what they are already planning, it made sense to her. She said that she would see if she could provide that. She said that she did not think there was any mandatory projects at this point, usually we would have to be in construction.

Next meeting: January 15, 2025

Agenda Topics:

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Today’s Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
Chris Magel	NOAA
Erick Van Dyke	ODFW
Kate Self	NPCC
Jacob Macdonald	USACE
Ida Royer	USACE
Tom Iverson	Yakama Nation Fisheries
Christopher Yane	USACE
Ryan Ashcraft	USACE
Charles Barnes	USACE
Carolina Andes	BPA
Tammy Mackey	BPA
Jonathan Ebel	IDFG
Sean Tackley	USACE
Christine Peterson	BPA
Andrea Ausmus	BPA Notetaker

Minutes by Andrea Ausmus, CorSource Technology Group LLC, Contractor for Bonneville, amausmus@bpa.gov (503-230-4439).