

Columbia River Regional Forum
System Configuration Team Meeting
May 15 2025
FINAL Official Notes

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

Final SCT notes are available on the Corps' TMT website under the FPOM link. For copies of documents discussed, contact Bonnie Hossack at Bonnie.Hossack@noaa.gov. See the final page of these minutes for the list of attendees of today's meeting.

1. April 2025 Minutes

- Charles Morrill, WDFW, had a few minor questions and gaps in the chat notes. He said that it would do nothing that would change the meaning of the meeting notes. He said that he would send those to Hossack and have her take a look.
 - Conder requested that Morrill CC him as well, if it is nothing substantial, he would consider the notes approved.

2. June Meeting Scheduling

- June 19 is a holiday, Juneteenth.
- Conder proposed rescheduling the meeting to Thursday, June 26, 2025.
 - There are not a lot of regional meetings on the fourth Thursday.
 - Standard time, 9:00 am.
 - There was agreement for the change from those that were present.

Erick Van Dyke, ODFW, said that the only thing on his calendar was the McNary Spillway Work Group regular meeting with FPOM.

Conder said that it was at 10 am and hopefully SCT would be done at 10.

3. FY25 Budget Update – *Ida Royer, Corps*

- FY25 Workplan was supposed to be posted this morning, but she had not seen that posted yet.

- As soon as she received the workplan Royer said that she would email SCT members with what the workplan is.
- She said that she was hoping to see the FY25 budget today.
 - It is late in the year, mid-May, so she wanted to note for both CRFM and the O&M program that this is the first time that they are seeing numbers for projects so there will be some internal dialogue that has to happen before more certainty is output.

4. FY26 Budget Update – Ida Royer, Corps

- Royer said that she did not know when they would see the FY26 PBud.
 - She said that she had heard that it should follow shortly after.
 - She said that she was hoping for this week, Friday, but she was now hearing maybe Memorial Day weekend.
- Royer said as soon as she heard anything on the number she would share that information.
 - There is usually a breakout of the detailed recommendation for project specifics.
- Royer noted on the FY 26 PBud; in case she did send out things before SCT meets again: the PBud is the President’s recommendation, it is not the final budget, so there are a lot of things that have to happen before SCT actually knows what our final budget is for the year.
 - Once the PBud comes out of the House and the Senate make their markups and conference to come up with a final budget. Then they have to pass it.
 - There is a lot that can happen in that time period.

Conder asked if Royer had the FY26 PBud yet.

Royer said no, she was hoping the workplan was out this morning, but she said she had not seen it yet. She said the FY26 PBud would be the next thing, but she was now hearing Memorial Day weekend.

Conder said if Royer saw something from the FY25 budget, that she might see today, that she thought was going to need some input from the region, SCT can schedule a meeting if necessary to discuss prior to June 26 if we need to. He said that SCT could probably manage something if Royer needed input, but if not, if she thought it was fine, then SCT can still go with June 26.

Royer said okay, and that it might take a minute for the Corps' internal folks to have a conversation too.

Morrill asked if for FY25, if we get that budget, are there any concerns with implementing any of the ongoing projects at this point in time.

Royer said it depends on what the number is. She said the Corps' strategy to date has been to execute everything so if the number is less than what they expected, they will have to determine what the remaining capability is for the year and compare that to how much funding they would have remaining with the final budget and then make decisions. She said it is possible we are going to have to start shelving things, it is not really a matter of whether we can get stuff done, it would be what we would have to stop because we have been moving everything forward.

Erick Van Dyke, ODFW, said the way that Royer had just said that, he asked, is everything on this list for this FY actually currently occurring. He said he thought that was the crispest way to ask.

Royer said yes, like she said they have been moving everything forward. She said that is the concern, it is mid-May and so the decision space that the Corps has remaining is less and they have been executing a lot of the program, so it makes it harder to pivot.

Van Dyke said he was tracking her and that was helpful. He said the total amount for the line items had not been executed yet. He asked if that was correct. He asked what word she would use for the spending and use of the dollars.

Royer said every project has an estimated capability for the year of how much they think they could execute to get that year's work done. She said the Corps had executed up until May 15 and then there is a certain amount of funding remaining to complete the project. Royer said that we are over halfway through the year and the Corps has spent a lot. She said she did not want to say that over half the projects have been executed because sometimes there are contracts and that is a big portion of the funding. She said it is not linear, but the Corps has done a lot of work, and the remaining portion of the year is the amount of funding that has not been spent yet.

Van Dyke said SCT would not go into detail of what that is right now. He said he assumed that Royer would be the one that is keeping her eye on that. He said if it comes that the budget is reduced then Royer would be charged with trying to figure out where to reduce that to meet the budget that is allowed.

Royer said that was correct and she would make a recommendation to the internal vertical team insuring there is agreement on the priorities.

Morrill said he would ask his questions in chat due to his feedback issue he was dealing with.

| *Charles Morrill (Unverified)9:12 AM*

| *Thank you, Ida*

| *Charles Morrill (Unverified)9:14 AM*

| *for fy25 correct*

| *are any on-going contracts at risk depending up level of funding ... correct/?*

Royer said as far as Morrill’s question about whether there were any contracts that are at risk, it would depend on the level of funding. She said for the Columbia, most of our contracts have been executed. The only one remaining is the PIT Trawl. She said she thought that was pretty high priority so they would likely prioritize that above the other things. She said she would have to look at the list of projects but did not think there was anything else. She said she thought that most of the projects were just labor.

Morrill asked if Ben Hausmann, BPA, could speak to that because Morrill thought BPA was pushing really hard to ensure that the funding was going to be available for the trawl.

Royer said she has been working with Hausmann and working with NOAA on that. She said she thought they had a plan in place. So, they are moving forward with the PIT Trawl. She said she would mention it is not really a funding risk, but she was not sure if many had heard that there is a judicial injunction, but the USGS Cook Lab and other USGS research labs were targeted to be closed. She said she thought it was supposed to happen this week and there was an injunction and there was a stay until next week. So, there is a lot of uncertainty.

Jonathan Ebel, IDFG, said he was thinking about this, this morning, kind of, there is becoming a lot of incoherence in the different parts of the forum. He said he was thinking about SRWG and SCT as BPA is taking on funding of some of the projects. He said it was hard for him to track or understand the implications of what was implemented or not if he did not have the actual split of what is funded by BPA, what portions are being funded by BPA before and after of the various projects. He said he did not know if SCT needed to sit down and go through that

or if it is possible to get a separate meeting on that. He said it is getting difficult for him to see the field here.

Royer said for the PIT Trawl it made sense, but it is joint funding.

Ebel said he was not trying to cross forums, but they are going in that direction. He said that in SRWG they are starting to rank BPA funded stuff too. He was wondering, especially if funding for some of the stuff in CRFM is not included in the budget, is not actually funded in the future. He said what is being taken up by BPA and what would they like, or what is the plan for next funding year because we are talking about a lot of these contracts that are not happening and USGS potentially and there is a whole lot going on. He said it is very difficult when you get bits and pieces to be able to see the field from his perspective.

Hausmann said he probably did not have very good answers, but he thought that he and Ebel were in the same boat. He said he did not think BPA has as much clarity as it maybe appears or that Ebel hoped that they did. He said he thought for BPA, the only thing he was aware of that they had picked up differently during recent weeks was to make sure that the PIT Trawl and the LGR work, both adult trap and tagging, were not going to fall through the cracks. He said that was only because BPA was paying for it regardless, it was just going through a NOAA subcontract. When their capabilities fell through, BPA just directly contracted. He said there are plenty of other things that question has come up on multiple fronts. For example, the BON ITS antenna, that is languishing right now for the same reason and BPA is trying to figure out how many of these things they can pick up that are normally subcontracted out and try to direct contract without sinking BPA's own contracting folks. He said that there is not a master plan for that, and he did not know that BPA had any more clarity, they are just taking it case by case. He said he had been running those questions up his chain of whether BPA could fund it and there is some reluctance to get too far into that because of what it could mean. Because new ones come up all of the time like Royer had mentioned USGS, it is a question of what happens if they go away altogether. BPA has a lot of stuff with USGS and that has a lot of tendrils. He said from his perspective his only point is that he did not know that there is a great path forward, BPA is just taking them one by one.

Ebel said he appreciated Hausmann's response.

- | *Charles Morrill (Unverified)9:25 AM*
- | *I had not heard that USGS could be shut down*
- | *Charles Morrill (Unverified)9:36 AM*

| *So discouraging ...*

Royer said she saw it very differently as far as what is Corps and what is BPA funded. It is very separate and that is not going to change. She said what Hausmann was talking about is within the agency wheelhouses, trying to think how creative we can get, to still get the work done and support the project with all of the uncertainty. There are two pieces, there is who funds what and that is pretty regimented and that is probably not going to change. There might be some small deviations then there is within BPA and within the Corps - they fund different groups and there is a lot of uncertainty about how we are going to get work done with all of the upheaval. She said she guessed that if there were questions about what is in each wheelhouse that could be a conversation maybe because of the PIT Trawl and anything PIT related tends to get a little bit confusing. There is an MOU between BPA and the Corps lining out who funds what. The Corps is trying to follow that, but it is not always just cut and dry.

Van Dyke said he thought that was helpful but it is emphasizing what Ebel was talking about, that the region does not have a clear understanding of how the cross-section Corps funds versus BPA funds, really functions with the list that they have. He said more importantly is how many of those are contracted events that BPA has left. He asked what is, if at all possible, in the region's ability to explore how it can be cross-pollinated when the Corps is not able to fund contracted events. He said that he was assuming that most of what was being talked about in this group is contracted out at this point. He said that he could be mistaken. He asked if that made sense, the nuance of contracting and who is paying for it and how it can be shifted if at all possible. He said that was something that we should be talking about if we can.

Royer paraphrased Van Dyke's question, if the Corps cannot fund something, what opportunity is there for BPA or somebody else to fund it. She said she would say that it is probably pretty limited, but she could come up with a better answer after she confers with Corps' division. She said she thought that the Corps' and BPA's wheelhouses were pretty set.

Hausmann said he thought that Royer was right with funding being fairly set. He said he was just having this conversation, and he meant to actually follow up with Ebel's other comment about how the ranking BPA did with SRWG, which is a Corps' forum, and historically all Corps funded stuff and now has some potentially BPA funded proposals in there as well. Hausmann said he thought that there was room for that to evolve in the way that people would like to see it. He said he sees an advantage to having things that might be in BPA's wheelhouse in that process, because the region gets to have a chance to give feedback and rank

it. BPA does not have a similar process; they used to have a process before Hausmann that was where the region could solicit proposals or people could put in unsolicited proposals and now BPA does not have that. If it does not go through the SRWG process, and Hausmann said that it was not saying that it is the right thing, he was saying if it does not then BPA does not really have a mechanism that is similar to be able to start a new project. He said it was a bit of a tangent, but he wanted to circle back to that because Ebel had brought it up and Hausmann had just been talking about the value or lack thereof or confusion of that. He said he thought it was worthy of a regional discussion to see if that made sense. He said he thought Royer was right there on certain things, and you can divide it on concrete sometimes and that falls within the Corps purview and sometimes system wide stuff is more in BPA's purview. He said he did not know if it was a rigid line necessarily and that is why he thought that there is confusion and some gray. He said he also thought on some of these topics there was a little bit of room for input from the region on what makes the most sense moving forward.

Conder said he heard Hausmann say SRWG is the main avenue that BPA can fund. He said he also thought there are some possibilities, at least historically, that BPA does some PIT antenna work that is not necessarily related to SRWG, maybe indirectly, sometimes directly, but sometime just more monitoring purposes. He said that BPA would fund PIT antenna work. He said that he was wondering if barges would fit under that category. He asked Hausmann to think about it or respond.

Hausmann said that when it comes to PIT stuff, like Royer had mentioned, BPA has the MOU with the Corps. He said the estuary kind of stuff, the trawl, has always been a little bit on the periphery of whether or not that should be a CRFM funded activity at all. He said all the other PIT stuff, if it is off-concrete that is a BPA thing and if it is on-concrete that is where the MOU comes in to divide responsibility between the Corps, BPA, and the Pacific States is involved too because they did the install and post-construction monitoring. He said he thought Conder was right. He said he was saying that he thought that he was addressing SRWG specifically because Ebel mentioned like now it is getting muddy with some potentially BPA funded projects in there. He said he wanted to say that has gotten muddy and he did not know whether that was by design, well certainly getting muddy was certainly not by design. He said he thought that allowing some of those to creep through there for regional input has kind of been by design but maybe that was not well received and maybe there is a better way to do it. He said BPA just does not have a similar process, BPA's stuff goes through the council for some level of review and opinion and BPA normally aligns with them, not

always, but other than that there is just not a similar mechanism. He said that BPA missed out or the region missed out on the opportunity to comment.

Van Dyke said he thought that everything that had been brought up right now has been kind of an important piece of information that is needed by this group on how that might be addressed and what is going on and what BPA cannot do. He said that if we could move forward on that it would be appreciated. He asked if they would somehow share it with the region so we could work together to provide ideas when possible. He said the other thing that stands out given the comment about USGS is BPA has a contract with USGS to provide information for water quality standard modifications. He asked if Cook Lab is dissolved and how BPA is intending to deal with that. He said it seems like that idea can actually expand across more than just this one topic so understanding how to address it is important.

Hausmann said that was huge one. BPA is looking at that across the board as far as commitments that BPA has that may or may not be able to be fulfilled because of the government issues. He said that he thought that Van Dyke brought up a great one with the non-salmonid monitoring because he did not know that would be an issue for this year, he is hoping that we get far enough in the season, and they are able to limp along. He said that does not help USGS employees as individuals and that is a whole other level of trauma, but as far as the monitoring goes, he said that he liked to think that we would get past the part of the season where that is going to be impactful if they go away. He said as to what we are going to do next year, we will have to find someone who can do it. It cannot just be anyone, they have folks out in different locations, multiple days per week. He said that he was not sure what that would look like moving forward. He said that he did not even know how long they will be in existence. And there is also the question of that particular contract, it is funded by BOA, it is not funded by taxpayer dollars, would they be able to continue on that work. Hausmann said that he did not know. There are too many unknowns for us to know but he did want to acknowledge that people are looking at those and waiting for the other shoe to fall.

Van Dyke said that was fair and just know that they understand that BPA does not know that they do not know either. He said figuring out how to bridge that gap is where the request is. He asked if they were going to hear what BPA thinks that they would do based on the rules that they are following.

Hausmann said that as he had said as soon as BPA has a better understanding then they will have that conversation again and come up with contingencies. He said

he hated to say it, but it is almost as hard to come up with a contingency right now without knowing what the final outcome is going to be.

Ebel said the meeting was going pretty far afield but he asked if it were possible, it would be helpful and a very interesting exercise moving forward if particularly on the interagency contracts of what the cost difference is between an interagency contract and contracting out to a private company because an obligation is an obligation it has always got to be done.

Royer said that she could speak to that a little bit. She said generally speaking intergovernment is a little cheaper, there is just not as much overhead. She said that there is some but they are not for profit, so it is not a hard and fast rule but usually, government agencies are a little cheaper. It is also cheaper on the Corps' end because they do not have to involve their contracting office; the biologists do Economy Act Orders themselves. She said Jake is their expert and it is a shorter process and more efficient in many ways. She said that they do often contract out for work because there is a lot of work that government agencies cannot do.

5. CRS SEIS Funding – *Ida Royer, Corps*

- Conder said last time the CRS SEIS folks were trying to update the cost estimate. He said it is important because of the amount and the impact that amount could have on other opportunities if it could be reduced.
- Royer said he still did not have a final estimate.
 - The team is still tracking to still award contracts this year.
 - It is currently shifting into the July timeframe and so Royer is hoping she will have the government estimate in June.
 - Also to understand what opportunity there is depending on the final budget to allocate funding to other things if the costs come in less.

Conder asked if CRFM was still currently operating under the previous estimate as of right now.

Royer said yes for right now.

SCT FINAL Official Notes – May 15, 2025

Next meeting: June 26, 2025

Agenda Topics:

- CRS NEPA Funding (ongoing)

Today’s Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
Trevor Conder	NOAA
Douglass Newton	Corps
Ben Hausmann	BPA
Ida Royer	Corps
Christopher Yane	Corps
Erick Van Dyke	ODFW
Kelsey Swieca	NOAA
Charles Barnes	Corps
Charles Morrill	WDFW
Ryan Ashcraft	
Jonathan Ebel	IDFG
Jacob MacDonald	Corps
Carolina Andes	BPA
Christine Peterson	BPA
Tom Iverson	Yakama Nation
Andrea Ausmus	BPA Notetaker

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

Please send any requested edits to Bonnie Hossack, NOAA, Bonnie.Hossack@noaa.gov