

**BPA TALKING POINTS**  
**Council Fish and Wildlife Program**  
**Funding recommendations for FY07-09**

November 2006

**Background**

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council (Council) recommends to BPA a slate of fish and wildlife projects that it wants the agency to fund in the Columbia River Basin. On Oct. 18, 2006, the Council made its final fish and wildlife project funding recommendations to BPA for Fiscal Years 2007 through 2009.

The Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program (Program) has historically integrated the Northwest Power Act requirements for BPA to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife and ESA needs, incorporating a slate of projects that can address listed fish as well as nonlisted fish and wildlife. The Council's FY07-09 recommendations address the ESA needs as far as they are known. Other projects will probably be identified once the states, Tribes, and federal agencies collaborating to develop a new FCRPS Biological Opinion have fully specified the slate of hydro, habitat and hatchery projects that will meet the Court's requirements.

**Questions and Answers**

**How did the Council arrive at these recommendations?**

The Council developed the recommendations from a list of more than 500 project proposals submitted by federal agencies, states and local entities and Tribes in response to a solicitation issued last year. An independent science panel reviewed the proposals for scientific merit and consistency with the program. Then, the individual states prioritized the projects within each province to fit within the Council's funding allocations, based on historical spending.

BPA appreciates that the Council worked hard to stay within BPA's established fish and wildlife budget and held the line on pressures to increase cost recommendations in the face of numerous and competing expectations. There will likely be additional ESA needs once the BiOp remand collaboration is done with its work. The Council also recommended setting aside approximately \$2 million per year to anticipate and incorporate ESA objectives from the BiOp remand collaboration.

**How did the Council address ESA needs in its recommendations?**

Among the criteria the states used to prioritize projects within each province was whether the project addressed needs for listed fish. In addition, the Council left about \$2 million per year in reserve to cover whatever additional needs the BiOp remand might identify.

### **How were the local recovery plans used in the project identification and selection process?**

The Council's subbasin planning effort formed the basis for project ideas that were submitted under the project solicitation. The Council issued guidance accompanying the project solicitation that instructed local review groups to "build on local input that was captured in the subbasin plans." Some of the same local and state fish and wildlife managers, tribes, fish recovery boards, and other planning groups that developed the subbasin plans are involved in the NOAA recovery planning work. At the time that the Council finalized its recommendations, though, the NOAA recovery plans that apply to the Columbia Basin fish were still in draft form.

### **Was the funding reduced in some provinces from what it had been historically?**

BPA increased the overall program funding for the 2007-09 program. In two major public reviews of costs leading up to setting the fiscal year 2007-09 power rates, BPA ultimately decided on a \$143 million average annual expense budget and a \$36 million average annual capital budget. The Council decided to distribute its budget recommendations among the nine geographical provinces according to historical allocations. At the same time, though, the Council set a goal to recommend allocation for 70 percent of the funding (from the expense budget) to anadromous fish, 25 percent to resident fish, and 5 percent to wildlife. The result was to change the historical allocation recommendations somewhat, moving some funding that had gone to the provinces in the lower parts of the Columbia Basin for anadromous fish to some of the Upper Columbia subbasins for resident fish and wildlife.

### **How will BPA arrive at its funding decisions?**

BPA's decision process and criteria will be fully documented in a decision letter. BPA will evaluate the projects' biological goals and rationale (the independent science review), whether they are targeted to the priority needs of listed and unlisted fish in each of the individual provinces and budget allocations. Projects with explicit environmental and biological performance objectives will outrank projects that provide coordination, infrastructure, or other support. BPA expects to follow the Council's recommendations closely and issue a final funding decision letter by mid-December.

BPA has no plans to set up a separate process to receive comments from project contractors or new project proposers since the Council has essentially provided that opportunity when it issued the draft recommendations for public comment.

### **What are BPA's goals for program reinvention?**

Broadly, BPA is seeking to reinvent the fish and wildlife program for FY08 and beyond to include more on-the-ground projects targeted to specific biological needs of the fish and less of the research, monitoring and evaluation and program coordination. In addition, we are pursuing greater cost-sharing contributions from federal, state and local partners. Finally, we are scrutinizing projects to reduce the probability of violations to

the Northwest Power Act “in lieu” provision. (This provision specifies that BPA shall not fund fish and wildlife mitigation “in lieu” of another entity that has the responsibility or mission to fund that effort.)

This may mean that some existing projects have to be phased out and perhaps new ones designed and implemented. For instance, BPA believes that fish and wildlife managers are responsible for population status monitoring and should fund activities such as monitoring the status of ESA listed stocks.

BPA will continue to meet its trust and treaty obligations to Northwest tribes under program reinvention.

**Will reinvention cost more money?**

The expectation is that it will cost less. In the Power Function Review 2 earlier this year, BPA concluded the reinvention would free up as much as \$15 million annually for additional on-the-ground projects. In addition, BPA increased Council program funding in the FY07-09 power rates from \$139 million average annual expense to \$143 million.