

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

July 8, 1999, 9:00 a.m.-4 p.m.

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES
PORTLAND, OREGON**

DRAFT

I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.

The July 8, 1999 meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Brian Brown of NMFS and facilitated by Cathryn Collis. The agenda for the July 8 meeting and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov.

Brown and Collis welcomed everyone to the meeting, led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

II. "4H: Strategy and Multi-Species Process.

NMFS' Donna Darm said that, as most IT participants are aware, the federal operating agencies, NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service are planning to re-initiate consultation on the operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System; that consultation is also commonly referred to as "the 1999 decision." People tend to focus on Lower Snake dam removal as the primary issue for the 1999 decision; there are actually a multitude of issues and decisions encompassed in that Section 7 consultation, including flow, spill, transportation and every other aspect of the operation of the FCRPS which will be addressed during this consultation, and the

subsequent Biological Opinion, said Darm.

The federal caucus got its start as a way for the federal agencies to figure out how to handle the 1999 decision, Darm explained. What we decided was that it made sense to try to address the operation of the FCRPS in the context of the Four Hs that affect salmon – hydro, habitat, harvest and hatcheries. The point is that there is no silver bullet, she said; hydropower isn't the only problem facing these animals, there are a host of actions that affect them at all stages of their life-cycle, and they all need to be addressed if we are to achieve the recovery of the salmon.

It quickly became apparent that we would not have time to do another draft recovery plan prior to the 1999 decision, Darm continued. Instead, we decided to do a “conceptual” recovery plan, which has been termed the “Four H Paper.” That's what we've been meeting to discuss and work on, she said; we've also been delving into the nitty-gritty details of how we're going to go about doing a Section 7 consultation.

This process has undergone a number of transformations since it began last winter, said Darm, probably the most important of which is the melding of the Four H process with the Framework process. As the Framework process has matured, it has become apparent to us that it is capable of developing full-blown alternatives for regional consideration. With that in mind, the federal caucus has been trying to ensure that the range of alternatives we want examined is captured within the Framework alternatives.

One of the messages I wanted to convey today is an appeal for the state agencies in particular to become more involved in the Framework process – at this point, there is no technical participation by the states in the development of the Framework alternatives, Darm said. Most of our meetings to date have been attended only by federal, tribal and industry representatives; given the fact that the Framework process is the forum the region has chosen to engage on many of the issues of concern to the states, I would encourage the states to increase their level of participation, she said – it will go better if everyone is engaged.

Darm said the Framework management committee will be issuing a report in October, which will describe all of the alternatives they have examined and lay out their analysis of the biological, economic and social/cultural effects of those alternatives on the fish and the region. In addition to that, said Darm, NMFS is working on life-cycle modeling for a couple of the listed ESUs, primarily as an example of the capability to analyze biological effects on all of the ESUs. It is hoped that these analyses can be completed by the end of the year. By the time the Framework report is released, said Darm, NMFS hopes to be able to display the results of this biological modeling for two or three of the listed ESUs. We also hope to have a draft Biological Assessment, which the action agencies will be submitting to begin the Section 7 consultation, as well as a draft EIS from the Corps on their Lower Snake River Feasibility Study, by October, Darm said.

In response to a question, Darm said that, although the Power Planning Council and the state Governors' offices have been closely involved in the Framework effort, there has been very little involvement by the state environmental and fish and wildlife agencies. Certainly they have

both an interest in the outcome of this process, and a great deal of expertise to contribute, she said. I'll convey that message to my agency, said Jim Nielsen of WDFW.

Jim Litchfield said he has been participating in the Framework's hydro work group; we are making some progress in pulling the hydro aspects federal and Framework alternatives together, he said, but it doesn't appear to me that the Framework process is setting up the other Hs to go through the kind of structured alternatives development and analysis that will allow us to see what's happening in hatcheries, harvest and habitat in each of the seven alternatives. Will there be other Framework subgroups set up to look at the other three Hs? Litchfield asked. The Habitat work group has been meeting for some time, Darm replied; as always, harvest and hatcheries are somewhat trickier, because most of those discussions take place in U.S. v. Oregon. In other words, she said, there is a forum for those discussions, but it isn't the same kind of Framework work group forum that is looking at hydro and habitat. Litchfield observed that it isn't likely that U.S. v. Oregon will be looking at harvest and hatcheries in the context of a wide range of alternatives, from a normative river to a vehicle for economic gain. I'm worried that, as has been the case too frequently in the past, the region will be devoting 99% of its time to hydro, and the other three Hs will receive very little treatment, he said.

Chip McConnaha noted that the seven Framework alternatives include a wide spectrum of actions on hatcheries in particular. While the hatchery work group is only just getting started, he said, there has been a great deal of thinking, within the Framework process, on hatcheries. McConnaha agreed that there is still a great deal of work to be done to address the harvest aspects of the Framework alternatives.

How is the development of the Framework alternatives being integrated with the U.S. v. Oregon process? Nielsen asked. I will admit it's a little hard for us, because NMFS has committed to the tribes that we will raise any dramatic new proposals in the U.S. v. Oregon process first, said Darm -- our thought is that we will discuss these new proposals first in the U.S. v. Oregon process before bringing them to the Framework process.

What is the scope of the Hydro Biological Opinion, asked one participant -- all species that have been listed, or all listed species plus candidate species? It will cover all species that have been listed or are proposed for listing, Darm replied. McConnaha noted that the Framework process incorporates more than just listed species; one of its unique aspects is that it is trying to integrate, in a meaningful way, wildlife and other aquatic species, in an effort to develop a true ecosystem approach.

Dave Marmorek asked whether the analysis included in the Framework process' October report will be quantitative or qualitative in nature, and to what extent it will incorporate PATH results. It will be quantitative, based on the Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment (EDT) method, McConnaha replied. The EDT process will incorporate the PATH results, he said -- it isn't our intent to try to come up with a new passage model. Our hope is that we build existing PATH results and hydro runs into the EDT analysis, using them as estimates of survival under the various alternatives. There will likely be cases where there are no existing PATH results for a given alternative, McConnaha said; in those cases, we will either have to ask that additional runs be done to address those alternatives, or do something else. Certainly, however, we'll be trying

to incorporate the PATH results to the greatest extent possible.

McConnaha added that the Council has stated that the Framework process will be morphing into the Council amendment process this fall – in other words, the Framework activities are a prelude to how the Council will be amending its Fish and Wildlife Program. He noted that the next Framework Management Committee meeting will take place tomorrow, at the Council's Portland offices.

III. Updates.

A. In-Season Management. Cindy Henriksen, TMT chair, reported that the spring flow period at Lower Granite, Priest Rapids and McNary Dams ended June 20; at Lower Granite, the seasonal average flow for the April 3-June 20 period was 114 Kcfs, in excess of the seasonal target of 100 Kcfs; at Priest Rapids, the observed flow for the April 10-June 30 period was 170 Kcfs, in excess of the 135 Kcfs seasonal flow target; at McNary, the observed flow for the April 20-June 30 period was 302 Kcfs, again, in excess of the 260 Kcfs seasonal flow target.

Henriksen said two System Operational Requests have been received from the Fish and Wildlife Service with respect to Libby Dam operations. The first SOR covered the 1999 sturgeon operation, requesting a three-day sturgeon “pulse” of full powerhouse capacity from Libby, followed by a gradual rampdown to maintain an incubation flow of 30 Kcfs at Bonners Ferry for 21 days. The pulsing operation began on June 14. On June 18, the incubation flow began; based on discussions with the Fish and Wildlife Service in a smaller technical subgroup, it was agreed that the incubation flows would continue for 18 days, rather than 21 days.

The Fish and Wildlife Service also submitted SOR 99-2, covering bull trout operations, Henriksen said. This SOR requested a gradual rampdown of Libby outflow to 8 Kcfs once the sturgeon incubation flow was completed, she explained; that outflow is to be maintained until additional salmon flow augmentation water is requested from Libby in July or August. We are currently in the midst of the rampdown from the sturgeon incubation flow to the bull trout wetted perimeter flow, Henriksen said; today's Libby outflow is 12 Kcfs, ramping down to 10 Kcfs tomorrow, 9 Kcfs on Saturday and 8 Kcfs on Sunday. Libby is currently at elevation 2436.5 feet, 12.5 feet from full and filling slightly.

Other headwater storage projects – Dworshak, Grand Coulee, Hungry Horse – continue to fill, Henriksen said. Grand Coulee is in the top two feet of its operating range; summer flow augmentation at Lower Granite has not yet begun, but will begin soon – perhaps later today.

A number of other SORs have been received so far this year, she continued; TMT has been able to work through those at its weekly meetings, and no issues have been raised to the IT until today.

Litchfield noted that Montana has been quite concerned about the 1999 Libby operation, and has not agreed with the USFWS SORs. There has been continuing discussion about how to mitigate for reservoir and bull trout impacts, he said – there is a lot of controversy about whether we may have expended too much water on sturgeon. All of that being said, Litchfield continued,

according to the latest forecast information, it now looks as though Libby will fill in 1999. In other words, there may be a way to get through this season without major reservoir impacts, but the situation is an ongoing concern in Montana. The state may be bringing an SOR to a future TMT meeting, he said; there still isn't a good mechanism to make decisions about the relative priority of storage water releases for sturgeon, bull trout and salmon.

Moving on, Henriksen addressed the issue raised from TMT to IT at this week's meeting:

"Based on the revised SOR 99-16 request for 57 Kcfs at Lower Granite through July 11 and use for Brownlee augmentation only. With a request for 55 Kcfs week-average flow for the week ending July 18, use Brownlee augmentation, then use Dworshak as needed.

"Idaho supports the SOR except the use of Dworshak to maintain 55 Kcfs beginning as early as Monday, July 12. Idaho requests holding off until later in July to use Dworshak water to better balance flow and temperature, and the needs of fish, and recreation needs on Dworshak Reservoir.

ISSUE STATEMENT:

"Given current information on temperature, flow, fish movement and forecasts, should Dworshak be used to achieve weekly flows of 55 Kcfs beginning as early as July 12, or should it be delayed until later?"

"For purposes of answering this question, assume discharge being released from Brownlee first (up to maximum capacity) and take non-power requirements of one-foot-per-day draft limit into account."

Henriksen said the current elevation at Dworshak is 1586 feet, 14 feet from full. If flow augmentation from Dworshak begins next week, the Corps anticipates that the project will reach a maximum elevation of about 1590 feet, ten feet from full.

Brown noted that the current spreadsheet shows a week-average flow of 54 Kcfs at Lower Granite for the week ending July 18, with 8 Kcfs outflow from Dworshak and 18 Kcfs from Brownlee. Isn't the Hells Canyon hydraulic capacity 25 Kcfs? he asked. I think so, Henriksen replied, but Brownlee has a one-foot-per-day draft limit which effectively limits Hells Canyon outflow to 20 Kcfs, given current inflows to the project.

Why didn't Dworshak fill this year? Dan Daley asked. Because we used Dworshak to augment flows at Lower Granite through May 19, Henriksen replied. It wasn't a flood control issue – you were using Dworshak to augment flows? Daley asked. That's correct, Henriksen replied. Nielsen noted that there have been extensive discussions on this subject at TMT; obviously, the cold, wet spring, which delayed runoff this year, had an effect, he said -- the Corps proceeded with its flood control operation based on runoff forecasts, but the runoff simply didn't materialize as projected, which made it necessary to augment flows at Lower Granite. Whether that's flood control or flow augmentation, I don't know, said Nielsen.

Henriksen said a complete record of the operation of Dworshak from March through May 19 appears in the May 19 TMT meeting notes; she noted that the flood control operation at that project was met on April 15. After that, she said, it was a flow augmentation operation.

Isn't 14 Kcfs the maximum outflow from Dworshak, without special waivers? asked Doug Arndt. Yes, Henriksen replied. Don't we have special waivers that allow us to go to 22 Kcfs outflow from Dworshak? Brown asked. Not to my knowledge, Henriksen replied. Yost said Idaho has approved the special waiver, and sent the original to the Corps, with a copy to NMFS. That's correct, said Henriksen; NMFS also requested a waiver from the Nez Perce Tribe. The response from the Nez Perce Tribe did not look like a waiver to the Corps or NMFS, and my understanding is that it went back to EPA. NMFS has since received a letter from EPA, approving a waiver to 120% TDG below Dworshak, said Paul Wagner. Given that fact, said Arndt, it sounds as though the ability to draft Dworshak to elevation 1520 feet by August 31 will not be a concern.

Daley asked about the rationale behind the salmon managers' request of 57 Kcfs at Lower Granite; it was explained that a week-average of 57 Kcfs is expected to yield day-average values of no less than 55 Kcfs. And why request 55 Kcfs if the true target is 54 Kcfs? Daley asked. Billy Connor originally forecast that the 1999 run timing would be late, Wagner replied; then, in June, PIT-tagged fish began showing up in large numbers at Lower Granite, which suggested that it was time to revise that forecast. Connor did so, and concluded that the 1999 run timing is actually earlier than normal. The majority of the run – 90% – is now expected to pass Lower Granite by August 1, which is a major change from Connor's original forecast. Given the fact that the period of peak passage appears to be now, said Wagner, the salmon managers want to be sure those fish encounter good flow conditions in the Lower Snake.

In response to a question from Arndt, Wagner said the passage forecast does include a survival assumption; in 1998, there was some question about the accuracy of that survival assumption. The point is that the numbers we're seeing at Lower Granite could be an indicator that the run is early, said Arndt; it could also be an indicator that the run is simply larger than expected, and there will still be a large number of fish in the river in August. It's just a forecast, Wagner admitted – a tool, and there is no certainty associated with it. With respect to your specific question, he said, there is no way to answer it at this time, except to say that the goal of in-season management is to put the water on the fish when we know they're in the river. Wagner added that there will be regular conference calls, as well as discussion at the TMT weekly meetings, to re-evaluate the 1999 Snake River flow augmentation operation.

Jim Yost said that, after considerable soul-searching, Idaho agreed to NMFS' request to provide additional water for spring/summer chinook flow augmentation early in the spring season; because that water was provided, and because the Corps' flood control program didn't match the actual shape of the runoff, it now looks as though Dworshak Reservoir will not refill in 1999. Yost noted that NMFS has said that the Snake River spring/summer chinook are not a high priority, and that they would prefer to use the 427 KAF of Upper Snake flow augmentation for fall chinook. The decision we're faced with now is whether or not to hold Lower Granite flows at 55 Kcfs now, despite the fact that Dworshak isn't going to refill, rather than holding this cold water for use later in the season. Given the fact that putting cold water on these fish at this

time will only retard their growth, said Yost, and the fact that this water will be needed to provide cooler migratory temperatures later in the year, Idaho is going to object to using Dworshak for flow augmentation for the time-frame in this SOR. He added that Idaho is interested in retaining a few thousand acre-feet of storage water in Dworshak to provide adult attraction flows in the September-October-November time-frame.

Wagner agreed that water temperatures at Lower Granite are cool at present, but are on the rise. He noted that, in 1995, when the Dworshak releases began in mid-July, Lower Granite water temperatures were maintained at about 63 degrees. In 1996, when Dworshak flow augmentation was deferred until late August, Lower Granite water temperatures reached 70 degrees before the cooler Dworshak water began to bring them down. Survival was very good in 1995, said Wagner, and it was very poor in 1996. Henriksen noted that air temperature and flow information for 1995 and 1996 is needed to provide a more complete picture of all of the factors that contributed to the disparate survival rates in these two years.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, Brown said in summary that, given current water temperatures at Lower Granite, temperature appears to be a less-important factor than flow in this issue. The question is really whether the difference in Lower Granite flows if Dworshak outflow is increased during the week ending July 18 will be biologically significant enough to outweigh the temperature benefits this water would provide later in the season.

Do I understand correctly that the decision made at TMT yesterday, and objected to by Idaho, was to manage to a week-average flow objective of 55 Kcfs at Lower Granite for the week ending July 18, relying on Brownlee to the maximum extent possible and supplementing from Dworshak as necessary? Brown asked. That's correct, Henriksen replied. And Idaho objected only to the possible use of Dworshak? asked Brown. Yes, Henriksen replied. Also, without flow augmentation next week from Dworshak, we could miss that 55 Kcfs target at Lower Granite by as little as 2 Kcfs or as much as 8 Kcfs? Brown asked. Approximately, said Henriksen.

What I'm hearing from both Idaho and the Corps, then, is that, in the absence of a more comprehensive plan for how to use available storage water throughout the season to benefit all species of concern, these parties would prefer to delay flow augmentation from Dworshak for the time being, Collis said. Given these arguments, the IT's determination was that the current information does not warrant an immediate use of Dworshak Reservoir as a source of flow augmentation water, given the fact that the tailwater temperature at Lower Granite is only 60 degrees F, and there is a reasonable chance that flows at the project will meet the 55 Kcfs requested by the salmon managers, even without added flow from Dworshak, if Brownlee outflow is maximized. The IT asked the TMT to revisit the most recent flow, fish passage and temperature information via conference call on Monday, July 12, and try to reach a consensus decision at that time. If the TMT cannot reach consensus, it was agreed that the IT will then convene via conference call on the afternoon on July 12. The Corps will rely on the input from the resource managers to determine how best to use the available storage water to benefit listed fish, said Arndt.

Litchfield reiterated that there is a need for a more comprehensive, prioritized plan,

laying out specifically how the available storage from each reservoir will be used to benefit each of the species of concern during the spring and summer in-season management periods. Arndt agreed, saying that, given the sometimes-conflicting needs of the ever-growing number of listed species, such a plan would help to avoid similar controversies in future years.

B. Plan for Analyzing and Testing Hypotheses (PATH). PATH issues were addressed later in today's agenda.

C. Integrated Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). No ISAB report was presented at today's meeting.

D. Water Quality Team (WQT). Mark Schneider reminded the IT of the water temperature monitoring issue that came up at the last meeting of this group. There are two main components of this issue, he said; both are captured in a memo, dated June 29, from Schneider to Brown (attached as Enclosure C). Schneider spent a few minutes going through his memo, which also detailed the questions related to this issue which the TMT was asked to answer, together with that group's response to each question. The bottom line is that the TMT was generally supportive of a water temperature monitoring program for in-season and post-season management and evaluation; the TMT was also supportive of water temperature information for planning future operations if a sufficient monitoring database (several years) was developed and applied to operations management and temperature models.

The recommendation that came out of these discussions was as follows, Schneider said: that a water temperature monitoring project would likely receive regional support if it were properly designed to answer the needs identified by the TMT. It was clear from the TMT's discussion of this issue that the design of the monitoring program is critical to the usefulness of the data. The Water Quality Team would be the appropriate forum to review the design of a temperature monitoring project; the water temperature monitoring project should be submitted for consideration by the Corps through the Scientific Review Work Group process for funding in FY'00.

Arndt observed that, if the data is to be of maximum utility, such a temperature monitoring program needs to include monitoring in the tributaries as well as the mainstem. Russell Harding of ODEQ said the state water quality agencies have already begun collecting water temperature data in the tributaries. In that case, said Arndt, we need a strong linkage between those ongoing efforts and the mainstem monitoring effort; there is also a need to identify key tributaries that do not currently have monitoring programs.

The group discussed the possibility of re-installing the tri-level thermograph system in 1999, a course of action strongly supported by CRITFC and the Council, as an adjunct to Ted Bjornn's ongoing study of water temperature and adult passage. We would like a resolution of this issue today, said Tom Lorz of CRITFC, because the longer we wait, the less likely it is that this information will be gathered in 1999. My understanding is that it is going to happen in 1999, said Arndt – Bjornn's work is funded and going forward. In response to a question, Arndt said he is unsure of the exact details of the temperature monitoring component of Bjornn's project.

Ultimately, Brown suggested that Schneider task a WQT subgroup to develop a comprehensive water temperature monitoring proposal for funding in FY'00; this subgroup can then bring the plan back to the full WQT for discussion, he said. Nielsen noted that CRITFC has already submitted a one-page proposal for a water temperature monitoring program to the SRWG; this proposal received the support of the other salmon managers, and was supported by the Corps. It was agreed that the WQT should incorporate the CRITFC proposal in its discussions.

E. System Configuration Team (SCT). Jim Ruff said the SCT met on June 21; the primary discussion item at that meeting was the ranking process for the FY'00 CRFM program. The Corps' FY'00 request was for \$100 million; the Senate approved a bill that included \$70 million in FY'00 CRFM funding, and the House is still considering its version of this legislation. Based on recent history, the House appropriation will likely be lower than the Senate figure, Ruff said; that means that, without a supplemental spending bill, the CRFM program will be facing a shortfall of at least \$30 million.

This makes the FY'00 SCT prioritization process even more important than usual, Ruff continued. As we mentioned at the last IT meeting, we've broken up into three caucuses – federal, state and tribal – tasked to develop independent scores and rankings for each of the items in the FY'00 CRFM program, he said. The state and federal caucuses have now developed their initial rankings, while the tribal caucus is still working through that process. The tribal rankings are expected to be available by mid-August, he said, and will not be available before the next SCT meeting on July 22. I would urge you to make it very clear to the tribes that the window of opportunity is closing, in terms of the usefulness of their input to the FY'00 ranking process, said Arndt. They are well aware of that, Ruff replied; the difficulty they're facing is the coordination of input from 13 separate tribal entities, many of whom have not actively participated in the CRFM program before.

One other information item, said Ruff – at its last meeting, the SCT discussed the testing of the extended-length screen prototype at John Day Dam in 1999. Because of mortality concerns during the spring test, the summer tests are being deferred. That does not mean, however, that there will be no further work on this project in 1999, Ruff said – there is a great deal of interest, among the SCT membership, in doing additional hydraulic modeling in an effort to understand the excessive turbulence in the gatewells, where most of the mortality problems appear to be occurring. The Corps will be presenting a scope of work for this effort at the next SCT meeting. Ruff noted that the FGE numbers from this year's spring test were encouraging – about 10% better than the numbers for the standard-length screens at the project. Descaling was low with the extended-length screens, but the increased mortality was a definite concern.

F. Quantitative Analytical Report (QAR). Tom Cooney said that, as most IT participants are aware, the QAR is a set of assessment tools for the newly-listed Mid-Columbia stocks. Cooney spent a few minutes going through the current activities of the three QAR work groups that have been pulling together the various pieces of that analysis. He said NMFS has agreed to coordinate this effort; we're working with groups like PATH and the Mid-Columbia Coordinating Committee to pull together their data and expertise, Cooney said.

Under our original proposal, we were to have been developing an approach to modeling habitat actions by this point, Cooney said; we decided last month that, given the habitat-related activities that are going on in the 4-H and Framework processes, we would instead defer to them, and gather together their work products by the middle of the summer. Instead, the QAR process is currently focusing on run reconstructions, said Cooney; this process is going well. The next major undertaking will be to pull together a perspective on hydro project impacts on Mid-Columbia stocks. The goal is to have the tool up and running by this fall, so that we can begin analyzing the impacts on Mid-Columbia stocks for options across all Four Hs, by this winter, in support of a BiOp early next spring.

We're in the process of putting together cost estimates for the QAR effort, Cooney continued; we're talking to the federal agencies and the PUDs about how those costs might most equitably be shared. In the interim, the modeling work group is mainly relying on data from PATH and help from NMFS staff to keep this effort moving forward.

G. Koch Report. Brown reported that, following Carl Dreher's presentation at last month's IT meeting, in response to concerns raised about the Koch Report and how it was characterized on the NMFS website, NMFS has agreed to post IDWR's comments on the website. Dreher's comments have not yet been received, said Brown, but they should be received very soon. To be clear, said Brown, I don't think there is a fundamental disagreement between NMFS and Idaho on the conclusions of the Koch Report – we feel the report could be clearer in its endorsement of the IDWR model as the best tool.

IV. Approval of Draft Water Quality Team Guidelines.

Brown said the Corps has submitted comments on the scope of the Water Quality Team Guidelines which should probably be discussed by the IT. However, because of miscommunication between Mark Schneider and I, we're really not prepared to discuss them today, said Brown. My suggestion is that we defer this item until next month's IT agenda; in the interim, we will attempt to summarize the Corps' comments in a way that will provide for a productive discussion at our next meeting. It was so agreed. Brown added that any additional comments on the WQT guidelines should be submitted to him as soon as possible.

V. Institutional Framework for Post-1999 Decision.

A. Regional Forum Process. The purpose of this agenda item is to initiate some brainstorming about where there may be rough spots in the existing Regional Forum structure, said Brown, which may need to be fixed, given the fact that it is NMFS' intent to include, in the next Biological Opinion, an institutional piece that is a refinement of the existing structure. Collis distributed Enclosure D, a memo, dated July 1, outlining the current structure and membership of the Regional Forum, discussing the relationship between the Regional Forum and Columbia River Basin Forum processes, and laying out several specific questions for IT discussion:

- Should the Regional Forum or Implementation Team seek to formalize a relationship

with the CRBF and reflect that relationship in its procedures? If so, what should that relationship be?

- Is the current makeup of the Regional Forum appropriate, or should it be expanded to ensure the broadest possible input?
- Should additional federal agencies be invited to participate in the Forum? This could include agencies without direct fish and wildlife management responsibilities -- for example, the Environmental Protection Agency, which co-chairs the Water Quality Team, or the U.S. Forest Service, which manages much of the habitat.
- State offices, such as state departments dealing with environmental quality, are participating in the WQT. Should they also be invited to membership, or are all state agencies adequately represented by either the fish and wildlife agencies or the Governors' office?
- Is this the correct organization for a post-2000 environment? For example, the Integrated Scientific Review Team has been inactive for at least two years. Should it be decommissioned, or should its role be reviewed and possibly revised?
- Is there or will there be a need for any additional teams? How should the membership of such teams be constituted (i.e. only from member entities, or more broadly)? If constituted more broadly, would all members have the same status relative to determining consensus or elevating issues?
- The PATH effort has been conducted under the guidance of the IT and a subgroup of the IT was established to deal with priorities. Will there be a continuing need for PATH or some similar modeling capability? Should the IT's relationship to PATH or, alternately, a more general "modeling" team be formalized?
- Should the IT play a more substantial role in the development and coordination of ESA-related studies on the mainstem? If so, should relationships with those groups now performing that function be consolidated and/or formalized under the IT?
- Are participants satisfied with the current procedures and conduct of meetings, or should they be more formal? Would more formality encourage greater participation by Montana and the tribes? Should the procedures be revisited and updated consistent with any changes agreed to by the IT? If the procedures should be changed, who should do this? IT? A subgroup of IT? Or...?

Arndt observed that one question the Regional Forum needs to reconsider is its scope – are we still focused mainly on the Hydro “H,” or do we need to expand to include more of a focus on the other three “Hs” as well? he asked. Also, what about geographic scope? The Regional Forum is currently limited to issues related to the Federal Columbia River Power System, and things like Willamette River operations fall outside the current scope of this process. Those are appropriate questions, Brown replied, but I’m not sure this is the appropriate time or group to address them. It may be more useful to discuss how we might get an answer to those questions, he suggested.

The group discussed the possibility that the Columbia River Basin Forum might play a role in debating the kinds of issues referenced by Arndt; Yost observed, however, that as presently constituted, the CRBF is a forum for the exchange and discussion of information and ideas, but has no decisionmaking authority. Some sort of appellate process of the CRBF may be a possibility, he suggested, if a forum is needed for decisions on non-FCRPS issues, or for the

resolution of issues that need to be elevated from the IT to another process. It was observed that there have been no unresolved issues elevated from the IT to the Executive Committee since 1997.

The group spent a few minutes discussing the possible inclusion of systems like the Willamette and the Upper Snake in the Regional Forum's purview; Arndt said it is his feeling that, in the future, the Regional Forum process probably will need to address all four Hs, and that it would be counterproductive to artificially limit the geographic scope of the discussion of the Regional Forum's future. As a practical matter, it's all part of one system, said Nielsen; there is an increasing need to look at it as a single system. Ruff agreed, saying that it has always been the Council's intention to look at the entire Columbia River Basin from a systemwide perspective. Of course, how you do that, on a practical level, is the real question, Ruff said.

It sounds as though this initial discussion has raised some additional questions, said Collis – first, should this forum be expanded geographically to include the Willamette and, possibly other systems, and second, should it be expanded to include the other three Hs -- habitat, hatcheries and harvest? Also, who should make those decisions?

Daley observed that, as a practical matter, we have already moved toward broadening this forum, and moved into the other three Hs as soon as we began to discuss Clean Water Act issues. As soon as we start talking about water quality, we're already including the Upper Snake, tributary habitat, reservoir buffer zones and a host of other issues in addition to the hydro implementation. And we need to discuss how far we want to go in that direction, in some detail, at this table, said Yost. Another area of interest that some would argue should be included in the Regional Forum's deliberations is the estuary, Arndt observed.

Moving on to membership issues, Brown observed that the Regional Forum is an open process, although it has guidelines to help direct the flow of discussion and issue resolution. While each of the Regional Forum committees has a list of official members, others, such as the tribes, who do not choose to participate as formal members at every level, are welcome to contribute their views and expertise when it is in their interest to do so, said Brown. Is it appropriate to leave the membership issue somewhat vague? he asked. Are there membership issues we need to address, or is the existing Regional Forum process adequately functional?

I think it's functional the way it is, said Yost, although I would like to encourage more formal participation by the tribes and Montana. At some point, it may be necessary to add more structure to the Regional Forum process, he said, but at this time, I don't see the necessity of moving in that direction.

Ruff said that, in his opinion, the current open membership idea is working well. To follow up on one of Jim's ideas, he said, when issues are raised from the Regional Forum subgroups to the IT, I think there may be a need to make best efforts to contact all of the parties that have a strong interest in that issue so that they are present at the IT meeting if a decision is going to be made, whether or not they are members or regular participants in the Regional Forum process. Tony Nigro observed that both the list of participating entities and the list of their representatives to the various Regional Forum groups was the subject of intensive debate early in

this process; while membership has become less of an issue as this process has evolved, he said, if we do decide to expand the scope of the Regional Forum process to include other geographic areas or additional Hs, that may be an appropriate time to revisit those membership lists.

B. Operations. The main operational question we wanted to address today is, should we plan to continue the current in-season management process, and does the TMT organization or process need to be revised in any way? Collis said.

I don't see how the Regional Forum can operate without a forum that brings the interested parties together in-season to discuss system operations, Nielsen said. As far as the organization of the TMT itself, out of necessity, the TMT has addressed a number of issues outside the strictly-defined scope of the FCRPS, such as Ice Island and Hanford Reach stranding. I guess that gets back to the scope issue we discussed earlier, said Nielsen, but personally, I don't see any way we can continue to operate without a TMT.

Brown noted that today's agenda does not include a separate item for the Water Quality Team; one of the things we need to consider, he said, is where the WQT fits into the Regional Forum structure – as a supporting subgroup of the TMT? As a supporting subgroup to SCT? Both? If both, is it actually a supporting subgroup to the IT? Also, he said, I agree completely with Jim that the in-season management process must continue; as the TMT has evolved, it has started to function very efficiently. He noted that one thing the TMT does not do is address longer-term management questions – it is an in-season management group, and there are longer-term water management questions that do not get addressed in that forum, nor do they get addressed anywhere else in the existing Regional Forum structure. That's something we need to think about fixing in the near future, Brown said.

Ruff suggested that it may be appropriate for the next Biological Opinion to suggest some priorities for water use, to help guide the TMT's in-season decisionmaking. It's hard for them to struggle with those kinds of issues in-season, particularly in low-water years, he said. It goes beyond the TMT's annual planning process, Arndt agreed – it's more of a tradeoff analysis, given a limited resource, which would flow down to the TMT from another source, possibly from NMFS, through their Biological Opinion process.

Brown said the 1998 BiOp references a number of additional long-term issues as well, including a look at different draft limits at Grand Coulee, a look at different Canadian operations, an assessment of the feasibility of obtaining additional water from the Upper Snake and possible changes to the FCRPS flood control rule curves. There really is no group within the Regional Forum that has picked up those issues, he said. We also need to discuss how operations for the additional listed species, such as bull trout and sturgeon, may impact operations for anadromous fish, said Yost.

With respect to Brown's question about the role of the Water Quality Team, Arndt said the Corps' comments on the WQT guidelines reference the fact that the group does occupy a somewhat unique role in the Regional Forum pantheon – they are an expert resource to both the SCT and the TMT, he said, and they also respond to specific assignments and requests from the IT. This somewhat unique and independent status can lead to some confusion about the WQT's

place in the Regional Forum hierarchy, he said, a place that may require some additional definition.

In summary, Collis said it sounds as though there is agreement that the TMT process needs to continue; that the TMT organization, process and membership may need to be revisited in the context of the larger Regional Forum scope question, and that some sort of long-term planning and resource prioritization forum or process is needed to guide in-season decisionmaking.

C. Facilities. It was agreed to defer the Facilities portion of this discussion to next month's IT agenda.

D. Coordinated Analyses. Brown distributed a handout (Enclosure E) enumerating the 12 currently-listed chinook, steelhead, sockeye and chum stocks in the Columbia Basin, explaining how these ESUs are grouped for analysis and describing two possible approaches to analytical coordination. The purpose of today's discussion is to open the floor to a dialogue about what kinds of approaches may work, in terms of answering the questions we need to answer, Brown said.

Brown spent a few minutes going through his handout, explaining that, of the groups listed on Page 3 ("ESU Groupings for Analysis") only the QAR and Son-of-PATH processes are actually operational at this time. The concept here is that a core group would direct analyses on these ESUs, Brown said; that core group would direct what kind of analyses are done and how those analyses are done, and would work to ensure continuity between analyses.

Page 4 ("Alternative Approaches to Analytical Coordination:") is a reflection of where the most recent discussion within NMFS has been going, Brown continued: that is, a movement more toward having that core group designed around the Biological Review Team model used for NMFS' listing determinations, and less toward the PATH consensus model. The main difference is that, in the PATH-centric Approach 1, NMFS is a coequal participant with the other federal agencies, the tribes, the states and the independent scientists; analytical approaches and work assignments would be developed collectively, on a consensus basis among these participants, Brown explained. Under Approach 2, the NMFS Science Center would exert more control over the analytical coordination process; we're in the process of staffing up to meet the challenge of NMFS' having to make decisions on 12 ESUs in the Columbia and an unknown number of ESUs outside the Columbia, in a way that makes sense and allows us to integrate the decisions we're making for recovery and through the Section 7 processes, said Brown. He emphasized that these are just ideas at this point; NMFS has made no decisions, as yet, about which approach to analytical coordination makes the most sense.

Under this model, then, NMFS would assume the independent coordinator role in PATH currently filled by ESSA? Nielsen asked. I haven't yet defined the tasks that will need to be done within the core group, Brown replied, so I haven't had a chance to consider ESSA's future role.

Arndt observed that this structure, in its current form, is extremely anadromocentric – is

that really where we want to be? Do we want to constrain our modeling to tradeoffs between the various salmon stocks, or do we want the capability to look at the tradeoffs between salmon, sturgeon, bull trout etc.? If the latter is true, said Arndt, then neither of these approaches may work. These are approaches to how we could develop the information that will allow NMFS to make the decisions it needs to make with respect to anadromous fish, Brown replied. To the extent that there are other groups developing the same kinds of information that relate actions to effects for other species, I would agree that there may be a need for a process to reconcile how actions affect different species, said Brown.

My understanding was that, this time around, we would be taking a more holistic, comprehensive approach to solving our anadromous fish problems, said Daley – one that would at least look for context outside the hydrosystem. The matrix model, from what I understand, lends itself to that kind of approach, but you have to have inputs to that matrix model, he said – you need a way to feed in other system coefficients. Is it our goal to answer anadromous fish questions in the hydrosystem, or is it to put together some kind of systemic approach? Daley asked. Again, the goal of this process is to answer NMFS' ESA questions, which includes all four Hs, Brown replied.

We also need to consider how this process fits in with the Council's Framework approach, Daley said – in that process, things like resident fish and wildlife are very much an issue. I'm not sure we can address all of those issues at this table, Daley said, but whatever process we come up with has to be able to link up with the Framework process.

Tony Nigro observed that, contrary to some of the statements made at today's meeting, PATH is not a modeling approach or specific analytical approach – it is a collaborative regional decision analysis process that happens to use some life-cycle and passage modeling in its present phase, to do some specific analyses we agreed had to be done in support of the Biological Opinion. The thing that bothers me about your Page 4 is that, one of the real values of PATH is its collaborative nature, Nigro said – we all have to sit down at the same table, and, ultimately, share the ownership of its work products. PATH is quite capable, as a decision analysis tool, of doing all of the things you mention in this memo. However, PATH is not equivalent to the Science Center Matrix, Nigro said. The strength of PATH isn't the tools it has used – it is the structure it has used to bring scientists from throughout the region around the table to talk about what the information is telling us and what we should do, from an analytical standpoint. The risk to the NMFS-centric approach you describe is that it will put all of the rest of us in a reactive, rather than a collaborative, mode, Nigro said.

Arndt said that one of the comments he has heard is that PATH has been drilling a hole in the ground of uncertainty that is a foot wide and a mile deep, while what is really needed is a hole that is a mile wide and a foot deep, so that we have a better understanding of the uncertainties. The question of who should be running the drill team – NMFS or PATH – is somewhat secondary, to me, said Arndt. There is a perception among some parties in the region that there are currently two drill teams running the operation, which has contributed to a lot of the baggage associated with PATH. The bottom line, I think, is that there are a number of facets to this issue that we need to have some very substantive discussions on, he said.

It sounds, then, from what I've heard, that everyone is saying that a collaborative regional approach is important, said Collis.

E. Independent Scientific Review. It was agreed to defer the Independent Scientific Review portion of this discussion to next month's IT agenda.

F. Missing Pieces. It was agreed to defer the Missing Pieces discussion to the next IT agenda.

VI. Independent Scientific Review Panel Recommendations to the Northwest Power planning Council.

A. CBFWA Process for Addressing Recommendations. Brian Allee of CBFWA reminded the group that it is CBFWA's responsibility to prepare a draft annual implementation work plan, a process that was completed on April 16 this year. That work plan was sent to the Council; the Council forwarded it to the ISRP, which has a statutory responsibility to deliver their peer review of the individual projects solicited by BPA, together with any programmatic comments they feel obliged to make, in a review of the annual CBFWA recommendations, Allee explained. CBFWA's recommendations fall into several categories – Tier 1 (fund), Tier 2 (fund if funding is available) and Tier 3 (do not fund).

In 1999, the ISRP looked over CBFWA's recommendations, concurring or disagreeing with the various CBFWA recommendations and introducing several additional tiers, Allee continued – delay funding, fund for one year and fund in part. CBFWA is now responding to the ISRP's comments in what we feel is an objective, technical way, Allee said, using a bottom-up process involving subregional teams. Those teams include those fish and wildlife managers working in the collective subbasins – co-managers, managing the affected fish and wildlife populations. Those subbasins have goals, objectives and strategies, which lay out an approach for restoring fish and wildlife in those subbasins; those fish and wildlife managers made their technical recommendations on the projects solicited by BPA and provided those recommendations to the anadromous fish, resident fish and wildlife caucuses, Allee explained. He said five of the seven subregional teams have met already to develop their technical responses to the ISRP project recommendations and comments.

The three caucuses will be meeting over the course of the next month to review those technical responses, Allee continued; they will then develop a set of management and policy determinations with respect to the ISRP's comments. Basically, the caucuses are responsible for putting out the management and policy opinions and recommendations to the Power Planning Council as to how to restore fish and wildlife, Allee said; the caucuses will ultimately produce a revised annual implementation work plan, reflecting, to the extent possible, the ISRP's input, for submission to the Council on August 20. The Council will then have a month to deliberate on the revised workplan before they make their decision at the September Council meeting.

In general, said Allee, we see this as a constructive regional collaborative process. We

feel that there is value in the peer review process; however, the subbasin-driven approach to the recovery and restoration process is extremely complex. Again, the ISRP has placed some of the projects within a number of new funding categories, Allee said; what CBFWA is attempting to do, again, constructively, in working with the Council, is to say, let's not get paralyzed by differences – let's move ahead where we can. While some may describe that as triage, said Allee, there has generally been agreement, in our preliminary discussions with Council staff, that there is little sense in endlessly debating those projects on which we have concurrence.

There are some fairly major disagreements inherent in the ISRP's comments, he continued; there were a number of projects which CBFWA recommended for funding, which the ISRP recommended not be funded in FY'00; there were also a number of items which CBFWA recommended not be funded which the ISRP said should be funded. Those are areas where much more discussion is needed, but in the meantime, we're suggesting that the process move ahead in a constructive way so that these decisions can be made prior to the start of the fiscal year.

Doesn't the Council have to go back to Congress if they recommend funding for a project the ISRP has said should not be funded? asked Arndt. They have to explain in writing why they're disagreeing with the ISRP's recommendation, Ruff replied. If there is considerable disagreement over funding for a given item, added Bob Lohn, it is likely that a Congressional hearing will eventually be called. Also, if there is considerable disagreement, BPA is not bound to fund a particular item – the Council is simply making funding recommendations to Bonneville, which has the ultimate authority to make funding decisions.

B. Council Process for Addressing Recommendations. Lohn said Allee covered many of the points he wanted to convey during the previous agenda item; he said it is important to note that most of the FY'00 projects received the endorsement of both CBFWA and the ISRP, and will require little further debate. As for the projects placed by the ISRP in the “fund for one year” category, said Lohn, the Council is looking quite specifically at these projects, and is working with CBFWA to develop an appropriate and timely process for further review. Many of these are issues that can be passed along to BPA as part of the implementation process, said Lohn; in effect, the Council's recommendation will be that BPA implement these projects, and work with their sponsors to satisfy any relevant concerns.

Another special category is “do not fund due to technical concerns,” said Lohn – in other words, do not fund because certain informational components may be missing. After discussing this category with the ISRP, he said, it appears that the ISRP is expecting that, in most cases, the project sponsors will say the requested information is available, but for whatever reason, was not conveyed in the project summary. The ISRP has agreed that, if they can get the missing information by mid-August, they themselves will revise their recommendation prior to the September Council meeting.

The ISRP's FY'00 review also included a request for an across-the-board look at supplementation and captive broodstock programs, Lohn continued. The ISRP is free to make recommendations on science, but how to resolve these issues will be up to the Council, and it is unclear, at this point, whether or not we will use the ISRP or some other independent group to

structure a response.

In the end, while it may be appropriate for the ISRP to assess the science and say that, with respect to some contentious issues, there is substantial risk involved if these projects go forward, Lohn said, the Council also needs to hear from other groups whether they agree with that assessment of risk. In the end, a policy decision will have to be made about whether or not those risks should be incurred. When all is said and done, that is a decision the Council is unwilling to cede to a science group, said Lohn. The overall theme I've heard from the Council members is that they do not want us to lower standards to fit projects in, and they look to the ISRP to set a standard of professionalism these projects should meet, he said. Our general philosophy is to work with the project sponsors to bring their projects and presentations up to the point that they meet those standards of professional competence.

C. Potential Effect on the Regional Forum and PATH. Brown drew the IT's attention to a spreadsheet (Enclosure F) showing the areas of disagreement between the CBFWA recommendations and the ISRP's review comments for the FY'00 projects. For the purposes of today's discussion, we've highlighted two areas where the ISRP's comments would affect activities that are under the guidance of the IT, Brown said – the PATH process, which the ISRP is recommending be phased out through the elimination of funding, and facilitation services, which the ISRP is saying should be used more selectively.

Marmorek distributed an updated PATH work schedule, and noted that the effort is making good progress on multiple fronts. He then distributed Enclosure G, a memo from the PATH planning group to the IT which frames a number of potential responses to the ISRP's comments. The memo articulates a desire to engage the IT and the Power Planning Council in a dialogue on four specific questions:

- Is there a need for the fisheries scientists involved in PATH (and funded via the Fish and Wildlife Program) to continue to provide services to the region?
- What exactly should those services be, and to what degree should they be coordinated?
- What magnitude of effort is appropriate?
- What should be done for FY'00 – terminate funding altogether, continue as proposed, or revise and rebudget the proposals? Given the ISRP recommendation, the latter two options require a written justification from the Council.

It's a long letter, said Marmorek; the two main points it makes are that the ISRP's rationale for "honorably retiring PATH" doesn't make sense, and the fact that there is a need to take a fresh look at the IT's and the Council's continuing needs for coordinated analytical work to fulfil various regional priorities.

Marmorek went through the deficiencies in the rationale the ISRP used to justify its recommendation (see Enclosure G for details), then asked the IT to consider the above questions, and the continued need for PATH's services. After a few minutes of discussion, there was general agreement among the IT membership that, contrary to the ISRP's conclusion, there is a continued need for PATH's services in the region; the IT recommended that the Council endorse continued funding for the various PATH project proposals in FY'00. Brown agreed to draft a

letter to the Council expressing the IT's views.

VII. Next IT Meeting Date and Agenda Items.

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Thursday, August 5, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at NMFS' Portland offices. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.