

**Columbia River Regional Forum
System Configuration Team Meeting
January 19, 2022
DRAFT Official Notes**

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

1. Notes and Recordings

- Corps will be recording the SCT meetings and will send the recording to the note taker. The note taker will then take the notes from the meeting and the recording. The draft will then be sent out to the group. Respond to the draft notes within a week. Kathy Ceballos will put all of the revisions, track changes, and send back out to the group. Be prepared to approve the notes at the next meeting.

2. Review and approval of Dec 2022 draft notes

- Notes approved by vote.

3. February SCT Meeting

- Ida Royer will not be able to attend the meeting in February. She asked if the group would be interested in cancelling the meeting or moving it to the following week.

4. Update on budget and work plans

- Congress passed the budget at the end of December.
- Next opportunity for CRFM funding will be work plan. Work plan is buckets of funds in business lines to be distributed after the budget passes. The projects can try to vie for the money. She is hoping that CRFM will be able to receive these funds.
- Expects to hear later in February whether CRFM will be able to receive the work plan money.

- CRFM did not receive any earmarks and at the final budget is the President's budget amount of \$29.175M.
- Continuing to push all projects forward.
- Expecting President's budget (PBud) for FY24 by the end of February.
- Currently the Corps is in the process of budget defense for FY24; after PBud is released will go before Congress to defend the numbers for the budget.

5. 2025 Budget Update on capability

- The question was asked: when can the COE share the numbers they are putting forward?
- Royer had shared the line items she is able to share; all projects that she is tracking can be found on the SCT spreadsheet.
- She is not able to share budget information outside what is publicly available, she is unable to share any of the FY25 budget numbers.

Tom Lorz, CRITFC, asked when the FY24 Presidents budget would become available.

Royer believes that it should be available around February 15. That is the aspirational deadline so there are times that it may be later.

Lorz said that if the PBud does come out in mid-February then SCT should still meet in February.

Royer said that the next SCT meeting is scheduled for February 16 so there is a chance. She did preface this saying that she does not get a read ahead of time. Sometimes it takes time in the district to work through the budget. She may potentially find someone on the program side meet to discuss but she will not be available.

Lorz asked if there is any chance for Ian to do the meeting.

Bellerud said that there is a potential to do a meeting a week out as well.

Royer plans on asking Ian to present and will connect him with Bellerud.

Jonathan Ebel asked to go over the reallocations in the FY23 budget.

- Working to adjust the capability for work plan as they have more information about the Willamette contract costs.
- Current strategy is to fund Q1 and Q2 activities.
- She expects the reallocations to change as funds are expended.
 - She will update SCT, as the changes are available.

Ebel asked if the difference in the FY23 Pbud and the FY23 Pbud Reallocations was moved to the Willamette.

Royer said that because the focus is on Q1 and Q2 needs and the budget needs for the Columbia are contracts that can be executed in Q3 and Q4. Royer said that there is strong support in the Corps to complete the Q3 and Q4 actions.

Charles Morrill asked if by focusing only on Q1 and Q2 needs will there be a chance that the items in Q3 and Q4 will not be funded.

Royer said that if they do not get work plan funding there is a chance.

Morrill asked if there are savings in Q1 and Q2 would they be used in Q3 and Q4.

Royer responded affirmatively.

Morrill said that it is critical that the COE have the work plans completed and ready.

Royer said that there is a timeline to work plan; 60 days.

Ebel brought up Bonneville Powerhouse 2 is a third of the reallocation. He asked if it would be done in the next three months and then crossed off the list.

Royer used the strategy of looking for contracts that have already been awarded and prioritized and fully funded them.

Ebel said that Royer has it tough when the budget is less than planned, and that planned amount is less than the capability.

Royer said that is her caveat, she will have to be moving money to try to move all work forward as far as possible. The reallocations will change (especially starting in March).

Lorz asked if there are opportunities for others in the region that have lobbying capabilities to try to aid in getting markups in the work plan.

Royer said that there is an opportunity for others to voice support of CRFM as the Corps does not make the final decision. She said that it is within the executive branch. She can pass on that information for those that would like to voice support or concerns.

Lorz said that he would like that information and will pass it on to his policy-lobbying group.

6. COE discussion about CRFM/O&M overlap update

- Royer said that she has been discussing this within the Corps.
- General guidance is that they are budgeting for all of the items.

- The decision on which business line should be funding specific line items does not reside within this group. If there are concerns, SCT is welcome to contact the division representatives.
- SCT is to prioritize CRFM line items.

Lorz said that it is an interesting concept because if SCT is not able to talk about it than there is not any place to talk about it. He is concerned that when there was plenty of money coming into CRFM it was not as big of an issue. Now that CRFM and O&M are cut back he is wondering how the projects are going to be done and how will CRFM but able to maintain their baseline conditions. He asked if there is plan to be able to meet the obligations. Lorz is frustrated that there appears to be a hole in the process.

Royer responded that she understands the frustration. The Corps also has vested interest in getting the projects funded. All they are able to do is express the capability. They are willing to take it up to Congress. The CRFM versus O&M decisions are made internally within the Corps based on certain criteria. If there is interest in why something is CRFM versus O&M, she or Tammy are available to answer. She feels that they are doing everything they are able to do as program managers but there is a limit to the amount of funding.

Trevor Conder voiced his concern about the role of SCT is to prioritize items. He disagrees with that as in the past they added items to the list such as ladder cooling structures and PIT infrastructure. The role goes beyond just prioritizing items that the Corps has added to the list.

Royer agrees that it does go beyond the prioritization. Bringing a project to the table to be considered as an addition to the budget is a valid action for SCT members, but determining how it is budgeted for (under which business line) is not a role for the group.

Conder said that there is a gray area and the more that is known of the criteria of how things are budgeted. Knowing how things are budgeted will allow the group to take proposals to the correct place. If the proposed action is not able to operate. The concern is that there are no obvious ways to find routes to funding.

Royer will bring this up to with her division counterparts (especially regarding the O&M side). Her reason for trying not to make it so black and white is so that CRFM is not put in a box. She said that as line items come up people should feel free to ask why it is CRFM or O&M. She also said that CRFM is not what it once was as far as flexibility in what's included in the Program. She is under intense scrutiny and needs to be careful about what is included in the budget so that it can be justified and defended.

Conder does not want Royer to feel under pressure. He feels the best way to approach it is understanding where the limits of CRFM and O&M are and if things fall outside of the proposed action.

Bellerud said that the operations and fish should not be divided. The dam needs to be maintained to be able to support fish operations.

Royer said that she hears the frustration and will look into what levers can be pushed on the O&M side.

7. Ongoing topics

a. Avian wires at McNary

- It is in an out year budget.
- Still budgeting for the design process (EDR, etc.)

b. Improved pit tag detection (especially below BON, BON and MCN)

- Below Bonneville:
 - PIT Trawl will be funded with work plan funds.
- Bonneville:
 - Funded the team to review the plans
 - BPA is funding the construction of the prototype antennae.
 - Corps is reviewing the plans to make sure it will not impede the ITF gate.
 - Install next winter maintenance period.

Ebel asked if the 40 thousand was enough to fund.

Royer said this is an instance that she will move money from the Willamette in order to fund it properly.

- McNary:
 - It is in an out year budget.
 - Still budgeting for the design process (EDR, etc.)

Bellerud said that the newer Pile Dike sites are more successful than the original; getting a lot more detections.

Lorz asked if the presentation is available to see. He wants to know how it is being reviewed; is it good under all flow conditions, is it a magic spot, can it be reproduced.

Bellerud said that it is still early but will talk to them about how it is evaluated.

Ben Hausmann said that there are plans to put in four more pile dikes with things learned from the better performer. Both the trawl and the flexible array can be compared against each other.

Bellerud asked if they ran the array last year.

Hausmann said that they ran it last year as an experiment. This year they are planning to run it as a comparison.

Bellerud asked if the data would be available on PTAGIS.

Conder is not sure will have to check with Gabriel. He asked Hausmann if there would be four additional antennas or four pile dike locations.

Scott Bettin said that there would be four sites total, three new and one modified.

Conder asked how many tags the new pile dike detected last year.

Ebel shared the link: <https://www.fpc.org/documents/memos/58-22.pdf>

Conder recalled a thousand tags counted and asked if that was correct.

Hausmann said that it accounted for 25% of chinook and 14% of steelhead. It performed well enough that if all the locations performed as well it would equal the trawl.

Lorz shared the numbers:

PD 6 – 3100

PD 7 – 424

Trawl – 9500

Conder said that he notice the trawl detections are lower than the past. He asked if it is a reduced effort or another factor.

Bettin they have not had nighttime crews for many years; it is a reduced effort.

Conder asked why there is not any nighttime trawls happening and the cost is the same.

The consensus is that it was COVID but there is no reason for it to cost the same.

Conder said there needs to be less slipping; there should be a move to get back to historical numbers before there is a move to replace the trawl.

Lorz said that it would be nice to be able to add input into the pile dike. He is unclear of how it is working but it appears that NOAA is moving forward on their own. He is

concerned that the pile dikes are being chosen over other options when there are opportunities elsewhere. He would like to be able to add more input.

Hausmann said that it was taken to the region and the consensus was the places needing improvement were the estuary, Bonneville, and McNary. They are all being addressed as best as possible. There is a possibility for the use of the barge next year as long as they are able to coordinate with the Corps. For the estuary and Bonneville, they are trying to check off the needs with the PTS antenna, pile dikes, flexible array, and the trawl. He asked if there is another angle needing to be approached.

Conder said that the trawl numbers are dropping and it is a good way to deal with the precision issue. He wants to have trawl improved back to what it used to.

Christine Peterson said that the trawl would be running in an experimental method, some flexible and some two boat.

Conder asked if it means that this means that there will be another year of low numbers.

Peterson said that she was under the impression that it would not but it is a good question.

Bettin said that they would be only comparing during the day with the flexible.

Bellerud said that they would be getting increased effort if the flexible produces usable data.

Peterson shared that Gabe Brooks is out at Jones Beach this weekend.

Conder asked if they are going to do night work as historically done.

Bellerud said that what needs to be looked at is detection per unit effort because there is also the question of whether there are fish there to detect. Look at more than gross detections.

Conder said they are looking at a new method but with the trawl doing a third of the work in the past it is difficult to know accurate survival estimates.

Hausmann added in the chat that it is his understanding that they will be back to historic effort with the trawl and daytime only with the flexible array. He will confirm and will be able to report within the week.

- c. Flex Spill Evaluation (no funding has been identified).**
- Leaning out on the flex spill evaluation.
 - SRWG process is taking a while.
 - Will modify as necessary.

d. PIT trawl - Are operations funded?

8. Action Items

- Bellerud – post power point about PIT tags and link to the AFEP meeting recording
- Royer – talk to Tammy about posting recordings
- Royer – talk to Ian about filling in for the Pbud meeting on February 16 – will cancel if needed

Charles Morrill asked about the presentation that Bellerud referenced earlier and whether it was AFEP.

Bellerud said that it was a presentation given at a joint FFDRWG / SCT session a couple of months ago.

Morrill shared that Steve Smith pointed out in his AFEP presentation on the 18th that improved PIT tag detection is essential to achieve the needed precision for survival estimates. He is concerned that this is not being considered.

Bellerud asked if the AFEP sessions were recorded.

Jacob Macdonald shared that they were recorded and will be posted on the FPOM website.

Lorz asked when the work plan success would be known.

Royer said that she is hoping by the end of February.

Lorz said that it gives him a timeline on when they would be most helpful.

Morrill proposed moving the meeting to the first week of March.

Royer said that there is a meeting is already scheduled for March 16.

Bellerud asked if a couple of weeks would make a difference.

Royer does not believe so and the work plan money takes a while to process down.

Bellerud said that when there is more information is known the group could reevaluate.

Next meeting: February 16, 2023 (depending on release of President’s Budget)

Today’s Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
Scott Bettin	<i>BPA</i>
Christine Peterson	<i>BPA</i>
Ben Hausmann	<i>BPA</i>
Ida Royer	<i>Corps</i>
Jacob MacDonald	<i>Corps</i>
Steven Juhnke	<i>Corps</i>
Jonathan Ebel	<i>IDFG</i>
Blane Bellerud	<i>NOAA</i>
Kelsey Swieca	<i>NOAA</i>
Trevor Conder	<i>NOAA</i>
Chris Magel	<i>NOAA</i>
Tom Lorz	<i>Umatilla/CRITFC</i>
Charles Morrill	<i>WDFW</i>
Tom Iverson	<i>Yakama Nation Fisheries</i>

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