

**Columbia River Regional Forum  
System Configuration Team Meeting  
March 16, 2022  
Final Official Notes**

Representatives of Corps, OR, WA, BPA, NOAA, and others participated in today's SCT meeting facilitated by Blane Bellerud, NOAA. Ida Royer, The Corps of Engineers, will be hosting the WebEx to facilitate better note taking.

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](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov). See the last page of these minutes for a list of attendees at today's meeting.

Last month's, February 16, 2023, meeting was cancelled.

March 16, 2023 was the first in-person meeting since the beginning of COVID. It will be a hybrid meeting so connections by WebEx will also be available.

**1. Review and approval of January 2023 draft notes**

- Charles Morrill, WDFW, did not have a chance to complete his review of the minutes.
- It was requested that any additional edits be in by close of business (March 16, 2023)

**2. Review and approval of remaining notes from 2022**

- Morrill had a few small edits.
- Bellerud decided to push the approval to next month.
- Additional edits can be presented at the meeting and approved.

**3. Update on budget and work plans – *Ida Royer, Corps***

- FY23 Work Plan came out
  - CRFM received an additional: \$18.2M
  - Total FY23 budget: \$47.4M
  - When the work plan request was submitted Royer requested exactly what she thought CRFM could use in the FY.
  - Royer still does not have the funds; it takes a while once appropriations pass for them to release the funds and for them to trickle down to the districts and projects.

- Should have the funds in April.
- Because it is late in the year, CRFM needs to make sure to execute all of the funding. It is part of the calculation for what was requested and what was received.
- Generally, provided allocations for all the projects that had capability expressed for in 2023. Trying to get everything going and moving to start the next fiscal year on a “glide” path.
- FY24 PBud released.
  - No project specifics
  - Total PBud: \$66.6M
  - Full capability for the CRFM program (unprecedented)
  - Means that all projects will be fully funded across the program.
  - In addition, some project from the FY25 budget will be accelerated into FY24.
- FY24 Tab on the Excel spreadsheet
  - Rows that are lined out
    - No longer continuing
    - No longer providing funding
  - Grayed out
    - Not included in the budget
    - May need funding for unknown reasons
  - Black unlined
    - Identified as having capability in FY24
    - Some are overarching line items or placeholders
  - Large portfolio
    - A lot of work for Walla Walla and Portland districts
    - Looking at resourcing needs

Overall, good news, we are able to fund in FY23, continue into FY24, and initiate new starts.

Jonathan Ebel, IDFG, asked why the Avian Predation Monitoring was grayed out on the FY24 spreadsheet.

Royer responded that they created habitats in other locations across the Northwest as part of the Caspian Terns EIS and so they are trying to transfer the ownership of the islands from the Corps to other agencies. She had thought that it had been completed, it had not. She is working with their real estate team to get those transfers completed. It does not have to do with the avian islands predation PIT detection.

Morrill asked which islands are being removed from Corps ownership.

Royer said they are not really islands. They created some habitats in the Klamath basin, Malheur refuge, San Francisco. They do not have the personnel to go and maintain them.

Ebel asked about the ranking. He said he went through it with the 2008 criteria but with it completely funded, he asked if ranking mattered. He was curious about how the process will work.

Royer said that it is an unusual year because they will have all the funding they need. In that case the ranking becomes moot, however there could be a benefit if they become resource limited and they have to start one project before another. She believes that there will still be a benefit of ranking. Because they expect to be fully funded forums like FFDRWG to track progress of projects. Royer is not sure because they have never started the year fully funded.

Bellerud asked what happens if we get stuck in another continuing resolution.

Royer said that the good thing about having the capability fully funded in PBud is that often times in a continuing resolution (CR) there will be guidance and the PBud will be the amount that they start off with. That will be determined by Congress. She is hoping that under a CR they would get the PBud amount.

Morrill asked about the Bonneville PIT Detection. There has been some discussion of the proposed PIT detection at Bonneville and discussions if this is the best use of these funds given urgent needs at McNary and below Bonneville. . Only doing one slot in the spill bay expected detection rates will be very low. Morrill wonders if there may be better alternatives for these project funds should Bonneville not go forward that could be used to fund additional needed PIT related work. fish

Royer said that there are three locations that are integral to the PIT detections, McNary, Bonneville, and below Bonneville. In FY24, they are starting an EDR to look at McNary, following the Corps process (alternatives analysis). At BON, the Corps completed the EDR and they looked at everything within the realm of feasibility, and Pacific States and NOAA were a part of the PDT process. They looked at what percentage increase they could get, the cost, the constructability. Looking at all those factors they did a ranking table looking at the cost benefit and the Bonneville forebay gates at the ITS were the most feasible and cost effective option. Royer understands that we are starting with a prototype and are not doing everything right away so it is not as fast as most people would like, but there were not many other great options. They felt that it was something that they could do. BPA has been funding the prototype and the Corps is getting something in next winter. It was the fastest track and Royer is not sure what would be Plan B.

Trevor Conder, NOAA, said there has been discussions that has put some of that into question. Ida may not be aware of it yet. There have been discussions at FFDRWG about cheap and potentially effective options that could put on the outflow of the Ice and Trash Sluiceway to cover the entire sluiceway that in the long run could be cheaper. They are not sure if it is feasible but they are looking into it right now.

Royer asked who is looking into it right now.

Conder said that PSMFC, Gabe from NOAA, and PDT Team are considering that.

Morrill said that he hopes that they are considering it. It is part of the funding and part of the discussion for the EDR. Following a lengthy break in communications with PSMC, Gabe and Gordy on the original design, in January '23 the EDR team rejected the proposed design. Within the next month PSMFC Kennewick staff working with Gabe and Gordy developed a new antenna design that meet the COE's needs. There are still some elements of uncertainty as the gate would require some modifications to install the antennae.

There are some merits to continue this work as a prototype for the continued evolution of PIT detection in spill bay gates. In addition there have been discussions of looking at the feasibility of PIT detection at the outfall of the Ice Trash Sluiceway based on some of the new flexible array designs.

Royer said she would need to loop back on that, as she had not heard that there was any feasible option for the Ice and Trash Sluiceway chute. They had looked at it extensively in the EDR process, the water is tumultuous, and Pacific States did not feel that they would be able to get very good detection through that chute.

Conder said that they talked about that with Gabe. The water is not as fast as it is in the RSW at Lower Granite. Conder cautioned saying the water is too fast or tumultuous. Gabe agrees with Conder. Some of the original concern with the original design may have been from the mining in the channel and may be cheaper and more effective to do an outrigger on the outside that was clear of debris. There is no detection system that currently can get 100% detection on that volume and the current systems would not be able to get close to fifty % detection. This should be considered when making these decisions. Gabe has talked about making a cheaper flexible array on the outfall to test. This is all new and Conder is not sure how the Corps is taking these discussions. He believes that it would be worth Royer taking some time for internal discussion to see if it sounds okay or not.

Royer said that if there is new information because she agrees that those manual gates in the Ice and Trash (1A and 1B) are going to be very important for detections and there is

not currently an easy design for those. From the Corps side they do want the biggest bang for the buck but they do want to make sure that it is a sound investment.

Morrill said that it is more than the biggest bang for the buck but the biggest bang in terms of the regional needs for PIT tag detection.

Royer said that the regional needs is included in the analysis. Percent increase vs. Cost.

Ebel said that the challenge to this is that 80% fish pass through the spillway. Less than 5% of fish, based on acoustic tags, pass through the sluiceway. When thinking about bang for the buck and regional needs the wrong details are being discussed. They will not get us where we need to be. Looking at the sluiceway is not a significant passage route.

Royer pointed to the EDR analysis that included the spillway, and the challenge at Bonneville and the shape of the OG. At the time, they determined a PIT detection was not a viable detection at the spillway. Unless you were to construct a new spillway with a new gate design.

Ben Hausmann said that he appreciates the value of looking at a method looking at wiring up the whole sluiceway. He asked if this new effort for an alternative method negate the next year's plans.

Royer said that she would still plan to install the prototype, as she does not want to lose the momentum.

Conder asked if she would still be able to install it with the redesign because it was going to require a new gate and a PDT to accommodate an antenna, which usually takes more than a year to accommodate. Conder asked if it need to be reinitiated and be put a couple years out because of this redesign.

Royer said that she would defer to BPA. She does not think that the gate is to challenging to construct nor was it too expensive. She had not heard that it was not going to be finished by this winter.

Conder said that he would not get in the way of this, as it is a learning opportunity. He is also listening to Ebel about the spillways, but he is also agrees with Royer. The problem with Bonneville is that there are many spill bays and an even distribution of fish going through those spill bays. It is not like Lower Granite where there most fish are going through the RSW and you could put your detection system in one bay and detect a lot of fish. At Bonneville, you could pick two bays and still only get 5 – 10% of fish going through the spillway. Which already has a low percentage of fish, close to 50%. Conder understood the conclusion why they did not want to go with that.

Morrill said that (unknown) and Gordy are excited about the new antenna design but concerned about the Corps ability to fabricate a new gate in a timely fashion and whether it would fit within the budget.. They are comfortable proceeding provided the Corps can design and complete the new gate for the antenna in time for installation in the 23-24 winter work period.

Royer said that the gate is being designed and constructed by BPA and Pacific States. She felt that everyone was on the same page, she had heard. She will verify with Scott to make sure and loop back.

Ebel said that Conder said that was correct that 55% went through the spillway.

Royer said that the way that Bonneville is constructed and the way the gates are configured it is challenging to put in an antenna.

Ebel said that it is unfortunate because the sluiceway will not get us there. Evaluations of dewave mortality depends on Bonneville.

Royer said that her conclusion after the analysis there was no easy option.

#### **4. Action Items**

- Be ready to approve 2022 Notes
- Rank FY24 (April 14, 2024)

Royer said that folks could send her their organization's scores and she could compile all the FY24 scores into one spreadsheet. Those that are not able to complete the scoring ahead of time can work through it during the next meeting (April 20, 2023). She is open to suggestions.

Bellerud agreed that many like that method because (scoring in the meetings) like to see what other groups are ranking and structure their rankings accordingly.

Christine Peterson, BPA, asked about the Willamette line item. She feels that because there are so many big-ticket items in the planning stages it will be interesting to see what might move into FY24 and FY25.

Royer is not ready to share the Willamette breakout. She has the summary, basin-per-basin, on that spreadsheet. They do not discuss the Willamette in the in the Columbia forum it is not open for discussion.

Ebel asked where he can follow the big projects are happening in the Willamette.

Royer said that she can share, the largest being the Dexter Adult Fish Facility. The modification was mandated by the Willamette injunction. They are required to do a suite

of research (RM&E) to evaluate all the injunction operations and implementations. They are having to do deep draw downs in some reservoirs, this has never been done before, and it will dewater a number of the intake structures and this will need to be remedied. Also have an ongoing EIS effort in the Willamette with a new BiOp in 2024; CRFM is cost sharing that expense to conduct the EIS alongside the O&M. These are court mandated and needs to be done by December 2024.

Bellerud shared that the Willamette plans for adults are all trap and haul and they are still trying to figure out how they are going to get the juveniles out. They are looking at the draw downs and surface collectors.

Ebel said that it sounds like it sounds like quite the project.

Royer said it is a big project.

Morrill asked about the Willamette PIT monitoring. They requested support with the PIT tag equipment monitoring and maintenance from PTAGIS to support adult detection. There was 100% detection rate for adults. He asked if there is a reason or a discussion at the Corps as to why they would not support or fund maintenance and operation on the PGE Sullivan Plant on the Willamette.

Royer said that the Corps funds projects at the dams when appropriate and when they deviate from that, it becomes challenging. Without knowing specifics that would be the answer.

Morrill said that he just wanted to raise awareness and try to get the ladder back online because it would not only benefit the Willamette but the Columbia as well.

Bellerud said that it can be confusing because the Sullivan Plant itself have a bypass system with detection.

Morrill said that he would share the notes with Bellerud.

**Next meeting: April 20, 2023 (Hybrid)**

**Today's Attendees:**

Name	Affiliation
<b>Ben Hausmann</b>	<i>BPA</i>
<b>Christine Peterson</b>	<i>BPA</i>
<b>Ida Royer</b>	<i>Corps</i>
<b>Leslie Bach</b>	<i>Corps</i>
<b>Steven Sipe</b>	<i>Corps</i>

<b>Jonathan Ebel</b>	<i>IDFG</i>
<b>Blane Bellerud</b>	<i>NOAA</i>
<b>Chris Magel</b>	<i>NOAA</i>
<b>Kelsey Swieca</b>	<i>NOAA</i>
<b>Trevor Conder</b>	<i>NOAA</i>
<b>Eric Van Dyke</b>	<i>ODFW</i>
<b>Charles Morrill</b>	<i>WDFW</i>

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