

**Columbia River Regional Forum
System Configuration Team Meeting
April 20, 2023
Final Official Notes**

Representatives of Corps, OR, WA, BPA, NOAA, and others participated in today's SCT hybrid meeting facilitated by Blane Bellerud, NOAA. Ida Royer, The Corps of Engineers, hosted 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. See the last page of these minutes for a list of attendees at today's meeting.

- 1. Review and approval of remaining notes from 2022**
 - All past minutes for 2022 approved and put into the record.

- 2. Review and approval of January and March 2023 draft notes**
 - March minutes approved
 - January minutes approved

- 3. Discuss FY24 Rankings – *Ida Royer, Corps***
 - Ida Royer received ranking scores only from Jonathan Ebel, IDFG. Royer proposed punting to a future meeting.
 - Royer suspects that the group is interested in hearing more about the SRWG process.
 - Though she would be willing to run through the line items, it would be more efficient to wait a month and have people send her their scores.
 - Royer did not have any budget updates.

Jonathan Ebel, IDFG, asked about whether the Corps considers the flexible array evaluation mandatory.

Royer said she does not believe that it is mandatory. It is a study and it would be ranked as such.

Chris Magel, NOAA Fisheries, asked in response to a question in an estuary meeting. They asked how the descriptions were formed and where they were coming from, how

broad versus how fine they were. For example, line 10 in FY23 and even more in FY24, they were confused by wording of the details of the definition.

Royer said for the estuary specifically she could provide more information, it would be the SRWG one pagers, and if it does not line up she can update it to make it more accurate. She understands that the FY24 studies include the database (which is not included on the FY24 tab currently) and it potentially could include additional line items to represent the additional SRWG activities. She is happy to spread out the line items so that individual components are ranked separately if required as well.

Magel understands and he will pass on the information to the estuary group; he added that Lynn might have already passed this information to them as she is acting as lead right now. He feels that just knowing where the information is coming from will be enough for them for right now.

Ida said as of now there is one line for the flex spill evaluation; there are a number of one-pagers out there. She was waiting to see what drops out of the flex spill discussions. She knows that there was a lot of discussion about those. She did not feel right to put those out yet as it comes to funding. Royer acknowledges it as incomplete.

Ebel said if this is true than he will likely need to reevaluate his ranks.

Jacob Macdonald, Corps, said that he believes the Corps considers the flex spill evaluation to be mandatory. The Corps wrote that they would do the evaluation in a proposed action so that is what they will be doing. Macdonald was not sure where Ebel's question is directed.

Ebel said that if evaluation is mandatory than it is essentially unrankable. It can be ranked but the rank does not matter.

Royer clarified that mandatory is generally reserved for ongoing construction. Royer and Macdonald will talk offline. Royer added that it is not to say that the Corps would not rank it Very High.

Bellerud said that in the past people have asked to be able to rank mandatories to be able to express an opinion or a stance.

Charles Morrill, WDFW, added that if it would have to be funded as a follow up, they would need to pass on ranking. The top projects are all exactly that, they can be ranked, but they have already been committed to be funded.

Tom Lorz, CRITFC, this was supposed to be done with a flex spill group, which met and then quickly disbanded. Lorz stated that the fact the Corps had three studies under the flex spill line item is something new. There are now three studies and we do not have a

good idea of what is in them or how they will turn out until we see what the COE through SRW produces.

Bellerud said that the ranking would likely be a two-step process because often people like to see what others have ranked line items. They then go back and discuss and reassess their ranks. There will be a preliminary session and then a final ranking session.

Erick Van Dyke, ORFW, asked about the lack of dollars amounts in any of the current FY24 list. He would like to know the rationale for those being empty.

Royer said that one of the reasons is that even though they know the amount is, normally it comes with a line item break out of the administration's expression of how they would like they would prefer the Corps to allocate funds. This year that did not happen, there was a lot of back and forth and it was bit rushed. She is waiting on the administration to indicate the allocation and she does not want to get ahead of that. She will provide it at one point but they are still having discussions with the administration.

Bellerud restated the fact that there is full capacity funding. He then asked about the how the full capacity funding would be divided between each section.

Ida explained that it was fully provided for the Columbia and that will not change. It becomes a matter of the exact details on the numbers. CRFM is fully funded, Royer just needs to vet it. Royer added that it is the President's budget and Congress has the power to increase and decrease the budget. They have never decreased the budget before but that is a risk. There is a disclaimer: It is not the final budget until Congress passes it.

Lorz said that they did decrease it but that was back before Royer was born. He remembers having to go to RIOG to discuss on how to prioritize when Congress with less. He did look at the budget and did appreciate it. Lorz asked if the Corps has had any discussions on how to fund McNary Spillways. He knows Chris has gotten a letter from CRITFC about McNary Spillways and Hoists. He asked if they have talked internally about using CRFM to help fund it. He is concerned that the plan is to use O&M to cover it. He was hoping that because there was extra funds available in FY23 they help accelerate design or the like.

Steven Sipe, Corps, shared that Walla Walla district programs is working on a plan on elevating and discussing McNary Spillway funding. There are ongoing discussions within Walla Walla district.

Lorz asked if there is a timeline adding that if it is decadal than he will be clearly frustrated.

Sipe said that they are trying for as soon as possible but there are some physical limitation on the spillway itself and so he cannot give a timeline currently. That is one

thing that they are working on. They are looking at what the timeline is if it is assumed that there is unrestricted funding. There are some funding limitations from Large Cap, the BPA program. They are also looking at how they can manage such a large chunk of the program themselves.

Lorz asked how this would be taken to the regional forums.

Sipe said that the request that he saw was FPOM but if there is a different venue then let them know and they will try to incorporate that into their plan of how they get it out to everyone.

Lorz said that FPOM would work. He had just thought that because they will need to design new hoists that it would have historically have been done through FFDRWG. He will leave it up to the Walla Walla district program.

Bellerud noted that hoists are not fish facilities beyond them being used as fish passage; he asked Lorz why he felt that he needed to add input in the design of the hoist.

Lorz responded that because they could have questions that apply to design. This is usually done in FFDRWG because FPOM is usually about implementation or repair. Lorz does not have a preference of forum but would like to have a set forum to be able to track efforts.

Chris Peery, Corps, said that they are planning on keep it in FPOM for now. In the future, there can be work groups put in place to provide updates. The plan is not to change the design of the spillway, the plan is to update the crane and hoist capacities. The gates need work but not replacement.

Lorz said that the current hoist is 170% of capacity and it is likely that they will need to redesign to come up with a new hoist. He would just like to know where the discussion for the work would be, whether in FFDRWG or FPOM.

Erick Van Dyke, OR, asked Perry how they will avoid the deficiencies experienced in the 2003/2005 processes of updating these devices that have failed. Van Dyke asked how FPOM is going to be able to keep that from occurring, he finds that this process might be a bit reactive. He wants to make sure that he understands.

Peery said that it is not reactive at this point. He said that they are going through their process to develop the plan moving forward. There is a PM and a PDT on the project. They are going through the process of looking through options. The engineers will be having design discussions to work on the development of the criteria for the hoists. The maintaining of the discussion with the region will go through FPOM. At the last meeting, Lorz asked for more updates and more information available. Peery does not see how he

or any of the fish biologist through FFDRWG can contribute to the design specs of the hoist or to crane.

Bellerud shared that in the past the way that the fish biologists contribute is by providing to the specifications of what they need to have their effective fish passages. They set the specs and then the engineers fulfill them. Bellerud said that the group is not expecting to get down to wire rope specs or the like.

Peery responded that it is an operation and it is something that can be discussed at FPOM.

Morrill agreed that it is appropriate.

Van Dyke said that as long as it relates to the prioritization of the design phase.

Bellerud said that he hopes that they are designing it to fulfill CRFM's requirements.

Peery said that conversation can be continued at FPOM. He feels that it sounds like there needs to be a specific work group put together to collect the information and specifications that the region wants so that they are considered in the design process.

Bellerud pointed out that they are available in the fish passage plan.

Jonathan asked if there should be continued conversation about this in SCT in order for funding to happen. He asked if the discussion hinders the possibility of funding from O&M.

Royer said that because it is in O&M realm there is nothing holding the conversation back. Because it is in O&M there is not much she would be able to add. Steve Sipes and Chris Peery would be the best representatives in the Corps. She believes having the conversation at FPOM would make the most sense.

Ebel asked Lorz if it would move faster if it were split between O&M and seeking appropriation.

Royer said that if Ebel were suggesting bringing it into SCT would be faster she would suggest not. They have their process and they have their team stood up.

Lorz stated that the with the Corps relying on O&M and more likely Large Cap means that CRFM has no part to play in McNary hoists.

Sipe said Walla Walla is evaluating, it is the program level discussion. Sipe hopes to be able to provide more information soon. The initial discussions, in his mind, are that they stay in large cap because that is where it is at currently. There is a possibility that it

would be more expeditious to get it across and Walla Walla is working through that determination.

Morrill asked what the most efficient way for CRFM to support the Corps in exploring all the options in looking at ways to incorporate funding to improve the likelihood of getting money for the large caps.

Sipe said that if it goes the way that he expects with the large cap and an O&M tail (~20%). It will be a large number. There will be discussions at that point.

Ebel said that with his limited understanding of the way that the Corps funding works. He does not understand why the Corps does not seek all avenues.

Sipe said that the funding has a distinct time frame and rhythm to it and they just submitted the FY25. If they change courses now it can be difficult. There are opportunities to find funding in between and that is what they are evaluating now. Once they have the internal discussion complete they will be able to share it.

Ebel asked when we will see the allocations.

Royer said hopefully in May she is waiting for approval.

Lorz asked when she needs the scores.

Royer said she is hoping for the administration vetting to occur by May, but it is likely to be June or even July. She will share soon as she has them. The rankings would come into to play more in a shortfall. The rankings will be less necessary if CRFM is funded to full capability by Congress. Before the end of the FY would be best.

Bellerud asked if Royer would like people to take the mental approach of the worst case.

Lorz said that is why he asked about McNary. It would influence how he would balance his rankings.

Royer said it is a living document and it can be revisited at any time.

Morrill said there is a need for the work plan for the Q3 and Q4.

Royer said that CRFM was approved for work plan and it should be dropped later this week. Moving ahead.

Next meeting: May 18, 2023 (Hybrid)

NOAA offices at 1201 NE Lloyd in Portland (11th floor)

Today's Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
Christine Peterson	<i>BPA</i>
Brad Eppard	<i>Corps</i>
Chris Peery	<i>Corps</i>
Ida Royer	<i>Corps</i>
Jacob MacDonald	<i>Corps</i>
Rebecca Cates	<i>Corps</i>
Scott Felding	<i>Corps</i>
Steve Junke	<i>Corps</i>
Steven Sipe	<i>Corps</i>
Jonathan Ebel	<i>IDFG</i>
Blane Bellerud	<i>NOAA</i>
Chris Magel	<i>NOAA</i>
Kelsey Swieca	<i>NOAA</i>
Kate Self	<i>Northwest Power Council</i>
Leslie Bach	<i>Northwest Power Council</i>
Erick Van Dyke	<i>ODFW</i>
Tom Lorz	<i>Umatilla/CRITFC</i>
Charles Morrill	<i>WDFW</i>

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