

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

Representatives of Corps, ODFW, WDFW, 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 notetaking.

Draft and final SCT notes are available on the COE's TMT website under the [FPOM link](#). For copies of documents discussed, contact Kathy Ceballos at kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov. See the final page of these minutes for the list of attendees of today's meeting.

1. Review and Approve July Notes

- Charles Morrill, WDFW, had some changes to the notes that he presented to the group.
 - Trevor Conder, NOAA, had said that the hoists were maybe sufficient to deal with the predicted amount of lifts.
 - Morrill said that they were under designed.
 - Tom Lorz, Umatilla, said that he agrees.
 - Erick Van Dyke, ODFW, said that Conder said what he meant and so it should stay that way in the notes.
 - Morrill said that the hoists were said to be under designed.
 - Bellerud said to add it as a secondary statement within the notes so that they are not mutually exclusive, and they do not negate the other. If Morrill wants to add that weight to the argument, insert that as an independent statement.
 - Morrill said that would work because Conder's point is correct because they are not currently capable of meeting the needs for the current spill program, they were not designed for that. The other side of that is that as they were designed, they were not capable of operating without exceeding the safety limits. Morrill said that we can confirm that with Chris Peery if we need to.

- Scott Bettin, BPA, said that because we are not sure whether it was not said in the last meeting it should be caught in these notes.
- Lorz said that he can send the memo that we have. He said that he will send the memo to Bellerud to attach to the notes and he will also make sure to send it to Conder.
- Van Dyke said what was missing in the conversation was that it was approved, and the design was used. So, the process and the fact that it got built implies something as well.
- Bellerud said that we could note after that, that Lorz supplied additional information about the inadequacy and refer to the attachment. Bellerud said it does not work, and it does not work for a lot reasons. The big thing is that it does not work.
- Notes were approved with edits and inclusion of the reference to the memo noting the inadequacy of the gates.

2. Review CRFM FY24 Planned Allocation

- No budget updates on the overall numbers.
 - No news on the budget side until Congress passes the FY24 budget.
- FY24 PBud \$66.67M
- Royer added a column with their reallocation plan.
 - Not a lot, pointing out some of the changes.
 - If new information comes in and there is a need to reevaluate this during the year, we are free to do this, this is just how they are currently planning to start the year.
 - CRS RM&E Flex Spill Evaluation
 - Original: \$ 1.75M
 - Reallocation: \$ 1M
 - Estuary
 - Original: more than \$2M
 - Reallocation \$ 620K
 - B2F2E Post Construction Evaluation
 - Reallocation cost savings

- Not originally funded.
- McNary PIT detection
 - Reallocation cost savings
 - Not originally funded.

Morrill asked Royer how much she was able to allocate to the McNary PIT.

Royer said that they are going to initiate the EDR effort and that usually costs about \$500K. So that is what she allocated.

- Royer said that this is for the incremental work that we can accomplish in FY24.

3. Current FY23 Allocation Update

- The spreadsheet provides a snapshot in time and is not the final of where we will be on September 30.
 - Being in the fourth quarter, as projects get toward the end of the fiscal year some are over-executing, and some are under-executing.
 - They will move money around to make sure everyone keeps moving. Things can shift slightly, nothing will shift majorly, only small increments.
- Royer added in 'Column I' FY23 Allocations with Carry-In.
 - There was \$2M of carry-in at the start of the year.
 - The PIT trawl carried in \$1.3M.
 - Did not get the contract executed before the end of FY22 so they carried that in and got that executed in November.
 - Showing it because it does add to the overall total.
 - Royer added notes in the spreadsheet wherever there was significant carry-in that was applied to a project to explain that.
 - The column shows the distribution of funds across projects and where we are at the end of the FY.
- Of note:
 - Reduced Funding for Estuary Habitat Studies.
 - Funding the Synthesis Memo – was obligated yesterday (August 16) to get that work done.

- Royer supplied a little additional funding for B2F2E.
 - They were running low, not a lot.
- The spreadsheet lists out where we stand as of August 10, 2023.
 - Royer will update the numbers again next month to provide another snapshot. She said that we would be closer to the end so it would be closer to where we are going to land at the end of FY23.

Morrill said that they had a lot of comments last week and the notes captured them very well. He asked if Royer had any feedback about their questions to her and the things that they raised about CRFM funding and Large Caps and anything else. He asked if Royer had anything to share with SCT from her discussions with Division and Upper Levels.

Royer said that if Morrill is referring to McNary, she did report the conversation back and the general direction was that was an FPOM discussion and Chris Peery is continuing to play point on that. She said that there is no plan to fund McNary hoists with CRFM.

Morrill said thank you.

Lorz asked Royer if they will be getting a schedule. He asked if Peery will be taking that on and will be something from Walla Walla district. He asked if there was anyone representing Walla Walla on that could provide that information.

Steve Sipe, Corps, said that they are working on it. He said that the fundamental question is what the funding is going to be, and Walla Walla is working on multiple avenues for getting funding. Once that becomes available that will set the schedule. They are working multiple avenues and trying to get it out there, but it is not available yet.

Lorz said that he would strongly encourage them to use every available means. He said that they have a document that says their design was not proper which as this is the priority of fish passage route, at the very least you can use some of the CRFM money, if possible, to kick off a design team. Maybe not pay for the construction, but at least get the design going. Lorz said that there has been an issue at Little Goose with the cooling water structure. He said that the design that was used with the pumps seems to be problematic, it seems like there might be a need for a redesign. He asked if that will be added to the 2024 list and if funds are available, they can shift into that. He said otherwise they will be wholly dependent on O&M to come up with that. Which, he said, if O&M funds that they will not have funds for other stuff. He asked if that will be considered.

Sipe said that they had engineering do an evaluation of the pump and they are evaluating whether or not that is a project or a manufacturer defect or something that can be remedied. He said bottom-line the pump manufacturer came out with a follow-on recommendation that was not implemented. They are trying to figure out where that fell through and where the path forward is on that. Sipe said that right now his gut is that this is not going to be a full on CRFM project. They are looking at some other avenues of funding and trying to work through that right now.

Lorz said that he knows that they will be talking about this in FPOM in a couple weeks. He asked Sipe to make sure that Chris Peery has the most up-to-date information. He said that it is a bit disconcerting that we had a pump in Florida, which he cannot fathom how that was the cheapest contract to ship a pump all the way to Florida for rehab, and it sat there for almost six months because they cannot get a new part from Europe, because the contractor could not go to a machine shop and pay someone to machine a new one. Lorz said that if this continues the Corps will be getting a very unhappy letter from some of them saying that the Corps really needs to tighten up some of their processes and that kind of stuff. This year the Fish Managers have gotten bit pretty hard with some pretty big differentials and had some adult delays due to not having the cooling structure in there.

Bellerud said that this is kind of vaguely reminiscent of the whole screen sweeper issues at McNary.

Lorz said shockingly enough that has been mentioned before, it turned out that the machinist at McNary could do the job. He said anything we can do to be a little more efficient and think outside the box on problem-solving would be greatly appreciated. Status quo is not going to work for them and Lorz said that he thinks the Corps is seeing a lot of pressure on that because the status quo is just not working. He said that hopefully NOAA, in their next BiOp – if doing a BiOp remand, will add a fairly large chunk about getting current infrastructure up to snuff because we have basically let it slide for almost ten years now and we are now reaping the rewards of putting a piece of black tape over the check engine light.

Bettin asked Royer if we are on continued resolution or if we have a budget. He asked if that will something that Congress will mess with in the next couple of months.

Royer said that she has not heard yet that we will be in SCR. She said that she suspects that we will hear closer to October. She said that she has not heard any scuttlebutt.

Bettin said that is something to keep an eye out for, Congress seems to be wrestling with the problem right now, extending the budget.

Bellerud agreed saying that he thinks that we are under the influence of some political seasonality going on here too and that always adds to the equation.

Bettin said that it should be put on the agenda for next month if there is an update.

Bellerud introduced Dana Bethea, a new addition to their branch.

Dana Bethea introduced herself as a new hire in Rich's branch. She works with Bellerud, Kelsey Swieca, and Trever Conder. She shared that her experience is in ESA Section 7, so she is doing a little bit of that for their branch and office. She is still learning ropes and everyone's names and voices and asked for patience. She also thanked Bellerud for the welcome and introduction.

Jonathan Ebel, IDFG, asked if Bethea is filling the position left vacant from Josie Thompson.

Bellerud said no, they have been carrying a lot of empty slots for a long time. He said that he cannot keep straight exactly who filled what position anymore. He said that they are basically leveling out and there will be a few more changes coming on because they have some retirements coming up. He said that they are in a change era. He said that Conder is not going anywhere as far as he knows.

Ebel asked if they have replaced someone for the Take Authorization position.

Bellerud said yes, that is now handled by Greg Sigletz, he took that on. And now Chris Magel may be picking that up from Greg Sigletz, and he will then become the primary person on the Take issues. Bellerud said to contact both of them just to be sure, but he thinks that Magel is the primary person now.

Ebel said that something that would be helpful from NOAA would be who and what responsibilities because NOAA is an agency that is more than just a one-person show.

Bellerud said it takes a little while to get everything shaken out and responsibilities redistributed and all that too. He said that they will let Ebel know but Magel is the primary on Take and if you cannot get ahold of him or if you already have Sigletz contact information he will make sure that Magel will get the message.

Lorz said that Ebel pointed out to him that in the FPOM Critical Infrastructure Unfunded List, and it seemed that like there have been some things added to that that are more CRFM. He said that there seems to be some bleed over. Lorz asked what the Corps plan is on that and whether we are planning on cleaning that up or trying to get some consistency between the two because taking stuff from CRFM to O&M is probably the worst strategy ever if you want to try to get something done.

Royer said yes, and it is technically illegal. She said that there is awareness and Chris Peery cleaned up that list and she thinks there has been a new list posted to the FPOM site that tried to remove some of those items. She said that if Lorz would look at the FPOM link and look over the new version and make sure that there is nothing on there that needs to be removed.

Lorz said that he will do. He said that CRFM is the only pot of money that we have right now and they are doing their best to lobby and get the Corps more money into that. He said that they are hoping that the Corps will use some of those additional funds that they are trying to get them and enhance flexibility to get more stuff done. Lorz said if we are going told that we cannot do anything in CRFM because of concerns about whatever process the Corps may have, Lorz would say he would like to see them lean forward some because otherwise he is not sure why he is lobbying to get them the additional money, if we are not able to utilize it in a meaningful way for fish. He said that he is trying to help them out as much as possible, but the Corps need to work with them.

Royer said that she hears that. She said that administrations come and go, support comes and goes. Part of her job is that she is consistent over time to build trust and transparency so that even if she does not have the administrative support, they cannot point fingers. She said that is part of the balance.

Lorz said that if she needs assistance lobbying whomever you are trying to build trust with, he would strongly encourage them to reach out for help with that. Lorz said that it one thing they can be good at, knocking on doors and saying the Corps needs flexibility, or we want to work with the Corps and help them get stuff done but they need the ability, the tools, and the flexibility to get this stuff done. Lorz said that if there are roadblocks that Royer is seeing let them know and they can go help you try to work on them to get you more flexibility, but just staying status quo and trying to build trust Lorz has heard that for the past twenty years.

Royer thanked Lorz.

Bellerud said that he did not want to be an outhouse lawyer, but he felt compelled to throw out one wacky idea. For the McNary hoist, he asked what if they just had a dedicated fish passage hoist and that is all it is for. It is not a structural hoist, it is not a dam hoist, it is just a fish passage hoist. Then we would not have to deal with not having enough hoists to make this work because if we need something hoisted there would be the fish passage hoist.

Royer said that she cannot speak to how practical that is. She is probably not the right person to bring it up to.

Bellerud said that he does not even know if there is even room on deck for it. He said but just as a concept.

Morrill said that it is an interesting thought. He said that you would have to ask project staff whether you could get it on the deck. Whether you could put one on the north end, one on the south end instead of replacing all of them.

Topics

- *PTAGIS*
- *avian wires at McNary*
- *improved pit tag detection (especially below BON, BON and MCN)*
- *Flex Spill Evaluation (no funding has been identified).*
- *PIT trawl - Are operations funded?*

Next Agenda Topics

- a. FY23 Update**
- b. FY24 SCR**

Next meeting: September 21, 2023 (Hybrid)

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

Today's Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
Christine Peterson	<i>BPA</i>
Scott Bettin	<i>BPA</i>
Ida Royer	<i>Corps</i>
Jacob MacDonald	<i>Corps</i>
Matthew Eppard	<i>Corps</i>
Steven Junke	<i>Corps</i>
Steven Sipe	<i>Corps</i>
Jonathan Ebel	<i>IDFG</i>
Blane Bellerud (host)	<i>NOAA</i>
Dana Bethea	<i>NOAA</i>
Kelsey Sweica	<i>NOAA</i>
Kate Self	<i>NW Council</i>
Erick Van Dyke	<i>ODFW</i>
Tom Lorz	<i>Umatilla/CRITFC</i>
Charles Morrill	<i>WDFW</i>
Chuck Barnes	

Minutes by Andrea Ausmus, CorSource Technology Group LLC, Contractor for Bonneville, amausmus@bpa.gov (971-442-5931).

Please send any requested edits to Kathy Ceballos, NOAA, kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov.