

**Columbia River Regional Forum
System Configuration Team Meeting
May 16, 2024
Official Notes**

Representatives of Corps, ODFW, WDFW, BPA, NOAA, and others participated in today’s SCT hybrid meeting facilitated by Blane Bellerud, NOAA. Jonathan Rerecich, 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 Bonnie Hossack at Bonnie.Hossack@noaa.gov. See the final page of these minutes for the list of attendees of today’s meeting.

1. Budget Updates

- CRS is underway and we are executing for FY24.
- At the last meeting it was requested to summarize the spreadsheet in more detail.
 - Rerecich had not had a chance to put that into writing, but it was communicated internally and recognized that it would be beneficial.
 - There were one-page descriptions provided in the past. This is something under discussion.
 - Rerecich had a brief project description with him to fill out the information at the meeting.
- At the last meeting SCT participants showed interest in assisting in building out capability for FY26.
 - This is something that they are talking about as being more applicable to FY27 as FY26 cycle is underway and it is working its way up from District to Headquarters.

2. FY25 Budget and Rankings

- FY25 PBud: \$75.2M
 - Willamette: \$50.55M
 - Lamprey: \$5M
 - CRS: \$19.65M
- Line 2: Continue efforts on lamprey work contemplated in the Columbia River Basin Fish Accords.

- \$5M applied from PBud.
- Chuck Barnes or Jake McDonald was not available to comment.
- Line 3: Post Construct Performance Standard Evaluations
 - \$1.5M
 - PIT Trawl
 - Plan to continue funding through FY25 and prep for fieldwork in FY26.
 - PIT Trawl update for FY24 is that we expect to get this awarded by the end of FY. On Track.

WDFW: Charles Morrill said this is highly important from Washington's perspective. He would rank this as an essential funding activity for FY25.

NOAA: Blane Bellerud said until they get ready to field some of the other stuff, they are working on we definitely need it if we are going to have any idea of what is going on for system survival.

Everyone was in agreement.

- Line 4: Avian PIT Detection
 - \$150K for a research contract.
 - System level project for generation of predation estimates.

Morrill asked if that is simply for an analysis of the existing data.

Rerecich did not know.

WDFW: Morrill said that would be a piece of information that would be valuable to have. Until Morrill sees the proposal and gets a better understanding of it, he said he would wait and see what the details are of that. He said that there is value in it but wants to see the devil in the details.

- Line 5: Adult and Juvenile spill evaluations
 - \$5.5M
 - For active tag studies for evaluating the impacts of high spill operations.
 - Being worked through SRWG.
 - Should have an implementation plan by the end of August. Final implementation plan by the end of October. SRWG coordination along the way.

NOAA: Bellerud said NOAA considers this very important because we are in a whole new spill regime and we need to update spill passage efficiency, root survivals, and things like that.

WDFW: Morrill said that spill passage efficiency is one thing that we can accomplish with the tag study. He thinks there are a whole bunch of other questions, speaking as one of the Sovereigns, that the active tag study may not be the best investment at this point in time. He said he would express the need to look at it quickly, the USG Commitment and to coordination and collaboration are all Policy issues, as well as technical issues in going forward with this. There is a lot that needs to happen before there is a lot more detail out; and see if the commitment and cooperation that was identified in the USG documents are played out for the regional partners in this agreement.

Bellerud noted that one of the original reasons this was suggested was to supplement PIT-tag reach estimates, to try to deal with the low detection rates. He asked if that is something the Corps is still thinking about. Bellerud said that he has not heard anything more about even developing methodology for that.

Rerecich said that it was his understanding that it was supplementing the evaluation of where we may have problem areas. Use another tool to help identify, be able to drill down, and take a look at the system and reach, between dam or at dam locations where we could continue to look as necessary.

Bellerud said, it was understanding that it is going to take some development work, so they are not violating a bunch of assumptions because to a degree they are apples and oranges.

Morrill said that he agrees with Bellerud and going back to this proposal the overriding consensus from Washington's perspective, and he believed from other's as well, was we drill down after we get a better look at the reach survival, e.g., Lower Granite to McNary. Before we drill down into the detailed issues and the primary source for that information.

Rerecich said as we get more information and as it gets more developed, he is sure we will have more to talk about here.

Bellerud said to some degree they can do double duty, once they are in the system because they are going to last until they reach the estuary.

Rerecich said those methodologies details will be worked out in SRWG.

Ben Hausmann asked if the first meeting with the region was next week on that topic. He said he knew that they had a standing spill evaluation meeting that they were going to do every two weeks where they were going to roll out information for the implementation plan and ask for input from the region. He asked if it was Wednesday.

Rerecich said that it looks like it is on his calendar from 1 – 2.

Blane Bellerud said that the CRS people are not going to be able to do it because they are all being spirited off to a work retreat for that week. It is something that they do every couple of years.

Rerecich said that they will probably want to reschedule that. He will talk to McDonald and Barnes.

Morrill said that the last he saw was the Corps was going to email out the update on the proposal on May 17 and it was scheduled for May 21. He said that he presumed that someone had but Morrill had not, but he did not know about NOAA being unavailable at the time until recently.

- Line 6: Estuary Habitat Studies
 - Data Transparency and Estuary Habitat Uncertainties
 - \$850K
 - Evaluation for required mitigation actions for habitat improvements in the Columbia River estuary and to support the continuing investigation into the relative benefits of alternative restoration strategies.
 - 2020 CRS Proposed Action and BiOp Requirements.
 - Funded by the Action Agencies on average about 300 acres per year.
 - Estuary research is utilized to evaluate mitigation action of habitat improvements.

WDFW: Morrill said it feels like there is a mandatory in there, but that Washington is comfortable with that continuance.

- Line 7: B2FGE
 - \$100K
 - Complete the construction of fish guidance units.

- They have been constructed and is construction closeout.
- Mandatory
- Line 8: BON PH 2 Post-Construction evaluation
 - \$500K
 - Concrete work was done to replace the metal flow restrictor plates.
 - This would be Year 2 potentially pending results of Year 1.Morrill asked when the results of Year 1 would be available.

Rerecich said that everyone should have results probably later this Summer. They have a Spring and Summer period for the evaluation. He did not have the schedule but said that his best guess would be we would have a draft report available in late-Summer or early-Fall.

- Line 9: TDA East Fish Ladder Emergency Auxiliary Water Supply
 - \$1.25M
 - This is to initiate the construction of the debris management tools that would be designed FY24 and FY25.
 - The Corps is trying to get out the DDR, plans and specs out for a contractor that the Corps will work with and continue discussion and coordination through FFDRWG.
 - Fund the construction contract.
 - Highly desirable to have this ready by the time the fish units are rehabbed in 2027.
- Line 10: JDA ladder cooling
 - \$600K
 - Fund the DDR, plans and specs.
 - DDR is underway now led by Walla Walla District.
- Line 11: John Day Mitigation
 - \$1M
 - Look at alternatives to meet the needs of the Umatilla Hatchery requirements and come up with cost effective means to do so.
 - Planning Study.

- Line 12: MCN Avian Deterrence

- \$5M
- Initiate the construction of the avian predation deterrent system.

WDFW: Morrill said Washington would be supportive of it, we need it. He said he still has questions about whether the wires are the best way to go but he knows what Tom Lorz will say and what Trevor Conder would say.

- Line 13: MCN PIT Detection Improvements

- \$600K

Morrill said while we are on McNary again, the one comment that would go back to the active tag study, PIT detection is really critical at McNary. If we were to release fish both in the Columbia region and in the Lower Snake, that information could be beneficial to passage information, approach information to MCN, and benefit the PIT-tag design work or consideration. He said he does not know if that has been considered at that point in time because the Corps was looking at them from a different perspective. He said that is one benefit that he would toss out to the group for consideration that could help guide the future work to improve PIT detection at MCN. ¹

- Line 14: MCN Spillway modeling

- \$2M
- Models from ERDC and work associated.

WDFW: Morrill said this is a high priority for Washington and felt most of his colleagues would also agree.

NOAA: Bellerud said he also agreed.

- Line 15: LMN Adult Ladder Cooling Structure

- \$600K
- Continue design on south ladder water cooling structure.
- DDR, plans, and specs level.

Conder asked why JDA has the DDR written in the project description and LMN does not. He asked if there was a reason for that.

Rerecich said they should both be on the same schedule. He copied the description from LMN into JDA. He said in the EDR in the Walla Walla

¹ This is also in reference to Line 5: Active Tag Study

district, they had three projects that had the same scope and then the CRS District had JDA. There are four Projects that are part of that DDR AE contract effort to keep them moving along.

Steven Sipe said that they are the same, the funding was a little bouncy, IHR was a little late, but in general they are all concurrent.

Conder just wanted to make sure that LMN was being considered as high of a level and it sounds like it is. He said he looks forward to some initial designs in FFDRWG. He said he thinks the current system used at LGR and LGS had some lessons learned. He said he wants to see how the Corps is considering what we have learned on that and what ideas have been developed. He said he understands it may be premature for that but prior to any designs being locked in he wants to have a discussion in FFDRWG so we can think through some of that and be able to contribute.

Rerecich said that makes sense.

Conder said on the McNary PIT detection he wanted to stress that it is a high priority for NOAA. He said he hopes that it is a high priority for the Action Agencies. He said that they have been pushing for several years now, it is still moving slow. NOAA would like it to move a little faster if possible. Conder said NOAA felt like a while back that they could get at least the PIT barge in the tailrace and start collecting data while we are messing around with this and that kind of got pushed aside. He said we have some pretty good ideas; we need to move forward as quickly as possible. He said many in the region support in order to get the survival estimates.²

- Planning to fund everything in FY25, will see what happens with the round of funding cycle with Congress.
- Get ready for a preliminary ranking in the future.

3. Additional Questions/Comments

Morrill asked if there was more information about the \$50M to be shared either now or next month. Anything about how that \$50M is going to come to the Corps, more clarification on whether, when, if, and how that is going to come to the Corps. What the process will be to engage with the region on that. If someone is available to provide more insight about that next month, Morrill said that would be helpful.

² In reference to Line 13 MCN PIT Detection Improvement

Rerecich said the \$50M discussion is being discussed at the higher levels, down at the technical levels they are waiting to hear. Ian Chane might have a little more information. He said he will make a note that there is an interest in understanding the \$50M better.

Chane said that he brought this up the last time SCT met. He said there is nothing to resolve there. He said he thinks that he mentioned where their thoughts are on the \$50M and so at this point there is nothing more for us to really get through at SCT. This just has to be discussed at a higher level as Rerecich mentioned.

Morrill asked Chane what is the sense of urgency to get through it.

Chane said it is urgent. He said he is hearing it and they are talking about it. At this point as he stressed the last time SCT talked about this, that commitment really relays right into the support they are getting for their PBud they got for this year. Getting the full capability. He thinks that is the plus point of this of all this year. He said that is playing into the commitments that we are seeing from the administration.

Kate Self said she would like to follow up with whomever she needed to, if it is appropriate, even though they are on the periphery they are on the list the spill evaluation regional updates. She said she thinks it would be really interesting for them. She gets a lot of questions and is sure they will keep coming over the next year so it would be awesome if she could be plugged in if appropriate.

Rerecich asked if she was thinking about the planning phase. He said he would make note and talk to McDonald.

Ongoing Topics

Next Agenda Topics

Next meeting: May 16, 2023 (Hybrid)

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

- AC Andrea Ausmus - CorSou
Me
- JP Jonathan Rerecich
Host
- 9712****53
- BN Blane Bellerud NOAA
- CM Charles Morrill
- CP Christine Petersen
- CB Chuck Barnes
- IC Ian Chane
- JE Jonathan Ebel
- KN Kate Self NPCC
- SF Scott Fielding
- SS Steven Sipe
- TI Tom Iverson
- TL tom lorz
- TC Trevor Conder