



United States Department of the Interior

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Memorandum

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From: State Supervisor/Deputy State Supervisor, Oregon Fish & Wildlife Office,
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Subject: Meeting subbasin planning responsibilities within Oregon

The Regional Office recently issued guidance on how to secure and maintain Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) involvement in the subbasin planning effort (Memo from Bill Shake, 11/18/02). A position paper detailing the Service's view of opportunities and responsibilities in the subbasin planning effort is also being developed, and will be delivered to the Northwest Power Planning Council (Council) in order to establish our role and expectations in the planning process. This memorandum is intended to supplement these other documents with specific ideas about how we might approach subbasin planning in the state of Oregon.

Background

Subbasin planning has been proposed by the Council as a key instrument for the management of natural resources and the administration and distribution of regional financial resources in the Columbia River Basin. According to the Council's scheme, the Columbia River Basin has been subdivided into 62 subbasins. Each one of these areas is expected to produce a plan that, after review and approval, will be adopted as part of the Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and

Wildlife Program. Subbasin plans will be developed locally and in collaboration with fish and wildlife managers, local governments, interest groups and stakeholders and other state and federal land and water resource managers. Once adopted, these plans will help identify projects that will be funded by the Bonneville Power Administration to protect, mitigate, and enhance the Basin's fish and wildlife resources.

The primary elements of a subbasin plan are: 1) Assessment, 2) Inventory, and 3) Management Plan. Briefly, the assessment is a technical analysis to determine the biological potential of each subbasin and the opportunities for restoration. It describes the existing and historic resources, conditions and characteristics within the subbasin. The inventory, includes information on fish and wildlife protection, restoration and artificial production activities and management plans within the subbasin, regardless of the funding source. Finally, the management plan identifies the goals for fish, wildlife and habitat, defines the objectives that lead to progress in fulfilling those goals, and establishes the strategies to meet those objectives.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Position

The Service is in the process of developing recovery plans for bull trout and other species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA.) There is considerable overlap between the subbasin and recovery planning processes, particularly in the area of biological assessment. There is also an obvious overlap in the outcomes, as actions proposed in subbasin plans or recovery plans will be implemented in the same watershed. The Service supports the subbasin planning effort and intends to participate by providing information and expertise early in the planning process to ensure that subbasin plans are comprehensive, scientifically credible, implementable, and have the necessary stakeholder participation.

Subbasin planning in Oregon

There are 18 subbasins within the state of Oregon's portion of the Columbia River Basin , some of which extend into Washington and Idaho (Figure 1). To ensure a coordinated approach to the planning efforts among these subbasins, state government departments and tribal entities entered an agreement that established the Oregon Subbasin Planning Coordinating Group. The purposes of this group are to support the development of high quality subbasin plans and to provide an open forum for the public participation of all interested parties. Mark Bagdovitz (RO staff) and Gustavo Bisbal (OFWO staff) regularly participate in these meetings to learn and report on any issues encountered by Oregon subbasin planners.

The subbasin planning process may be divided into four main phases (Table 1): 1) Contract, 2) Assessment/Inventory, 3) Management plan, and 4) Subbasin plan review and adoption. Each one of these phases is different in nature, products, and duration; therefore, each one requires a different level of expertise and involvement.

The ***Contract phase*** contains purely administrative elements, such as a coarse description of lead participants, teams, and authors of the plan. It also includes a schedule, description of deliverables and milestones, and a budget for the duration of the planning task. We will review these contracts to make sure that the Service's interests are properly acknowledged, to ensure uniformity among the activities and products proposed for each subbasin plan, and to identify potential technical and/or policy inconsistencies with respect to Service approaches.

The ***Assessment/Inventory phase*** features primarily technical aspects of the subbasin plan. We will need to tap the enormous amount of information, data, expertise, and documentation stored by Service personnel—mainly field biologists and technical staff. Most of these elements were processed and developed as part of consultations, biological assessments, biological opinions, habitat conservation plans, etc. By identifying and making these products readily available early on in the process, we may be able to help strengthen the analytical foundation of subbasin plans, and to complement existing Service conclusions on the status of species, ecosystem functions, and limiting factors.

The ***Management Plan phase*** anticipates intense policy discussions to define the desired end state of each subbasin, biological objectives, and the proposed means to accomplish those goals. Inevitably, this debate will be loaded with the positions, mandates, values and interests of all the stakeholders involved, which will add complexity and difficulty to this portion of the subbasin plan. Assistance of policy staff and management will be necessary to share these responsibilities and represent the Service at the negotiation table.

The ***Subbasin Plan Review and Adoption phase*** is primarily a function of the Council and its Independent Scientific Review Panel. There is an opportunity for public comment before the final subbasin plans are adopted into the Council's program. Thus, we will have another instance to provide input into the process and further refine the final products. Again, this will require the involvement of senior policy staff at our state and regional offices.

Responsibilities of Service Staff

Regardless of the actual timeline for completion (discussed in the next section), we can anticipate that subbasin planning will be a major task for many of us during all of 2003, and at least the first half of 2004. Our responsibilities will focus on promoting consistency between these plans and other interests and products relevant to our Service-wide resource management and regulatory duties. Ultimately, our mandate is to transition from the planning stage to the funding and implementation of on-the-ground activities that benefit fish and wildlife.

In order to provide timely contributions and to ensure a fair consideration and inclusion of Service interests, it is essential to maintain our presence and visibility in each subbasin forum. Once subbasin planners formalize their contracts and initiate their activities, there will be a large number of technical and policy meetings throughout the state. There will also be an intense communication and exchange of information with our regional partners. This will involve both

technical and policy staff, depending on the issues encountered during the different planning phases in each subbasin.

We do not foresee the Service receiving writing assignments or becoming lead entities for developing these plans. Instead, we intend to take an active role in supporting and encouraging the local/regional planning process, providing information and data where appropriate, assisting in stakeholder involvement, and bringing additional scientific value to the planning process. We should be prepared to review several drafts and products and to participate collaboratively in the functions of technical and policy sub-groups and teams selected in each subbasin.

Within the Service, collaborative participation of staff from the Regional Office, State Offices, and Field Offices will be necessary. Consistent with the RO's guidance, we have identified an initial list of Service staff to assist in the subbasin planning process in the state of Oregon:

Gustavo Bisbal, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office, 503-231-6179
 Nancy Gilbert, Bend Field Office, 541-383-7146
 Gary Miller, La Grande Field Office, 541-962-8584
 Ron Rhew, Columbia River Fisheries Program Office, 360-696-7605

Gustavo will serve as the primary OFWO point of contact/team lead for all subbasins for which our office has lead responsibility, and will maintain proper coordination and communication between planning groups, field offices, and the RO. Within the three levels contained in the regional subbasin planning infrastructure, he will facilitate the work of individual team members with either technical or policy responsibilities, and provide overall oversight and guidance, especially with respect to uniformity and consistency between subbasin plans in the state of Oregon (Level 1). In addition to his geographic-specific duties, he will also provide liaison with the Oregon Subbasin Planning Coordination Group and with the Council, to maintain adequate presence by the Service at these planning levels and to ensure that subbasin planning in Oregon is complementary to and supportive of Service initiatives and responsibilities in the state (Level 2).

All other members of this group or their designees, and their staff, will probably become involved mainly during phases 2-4 of the subbasin planning process. Specific geographic assignments are as follows:

SUBBASIN	PROVINCE	LEAD	ASSISTANCE
Estuary	Estuary	G. Bisbal	R. Rhew
Columbia Lower	Lower Columbia	G. Bisbal	R. Rhew
Sandy	Lower Columbia	G. Bisbal	R. Rhew
Willamette	Lower Columbia	D. Young ¹	R. Rhew
Hood River	Col. R. Gorge	N. Gilbert	R. Rhew
Columbia Gorge	Col. R. Gorge	R. Rhew	N. Gilbert
Fifteenmile	Col. R. Gorge	N. Gilbert	R. Rhew
Deschutes	Columbia Plateau	N. Gilbert	R. Rhew

John Day	Columbia Plateau	N. Gilbert	R. Rhew G. Miller
Umatilla	Columbia Plateau	G. Miller	R. Rhew
Walla Walla	Columbia Plateau	Spokane Office	R. Rhew G. Miller LSRCP
SUBBASIN	PROVINCE	LEAD	ASSISTANCE
Grande Ronde	Blue Mountain	G. Miller	R. Rhew LSRCP
Innaha	Blue Mountain	G. Miller	R. Rhew LSRCP
Powder	Middle Snake	G. Miller	
Burnt	Middle Snake	G. Miller	
Snake Lower Middle ²	Middle Snake	Boise and Dworshak Offices	G. Miller
Malheur	Middle Snake	G. Miller	
Owyhee	Middle Snake	G. Miller	Boise Office

¹ Probable, but not yet finalized.

² The assignment of lead and assisting office in the Snake Lower Middle subbasin departs from the RO guidance memo of 11/18/02. This change reflects the active involvement of the Boise and Dworshak Offices in the current relicensing process of the Hells Canyon complex.

The assignments on the table above may change depending on interest, availability, or competing priorities. In some instances, it may be necessary to involve policy or technical personnel for activities not included within the geographical jurisdiction of their field office. Of course, the involvement of additional technical staff will become necessary on an occasional basis depending on their disciplines and level of expertise, and the issues that arise during different phases of the process. The specific level and nature of this involvement is impossible to predict at this time, but supervisors should anticipate some level of involvement of their personnel.

Schedule

In general, the proposed timeline for the completion of a subbasin plan is between 14 and 16 months from the time of contract signature (Table 1). For the most part, the planning effort in the 18 Oregon subbasins is at the early stages of organization and development, or not yet initiated at all. This presents an opportunity for us to join these planning groups right at the beginning of their deliberations.

A few subbasins have only recently started to perform their contractual responsibilities. It is anticipated that all remaining subbasins will reach their contract authorization in upcoming weeks. Given the duration of the overall planning process, the current expectation suggests that plans for Oregon subbasins will become final sometime during the first semester of 2004. Further delays

are possible, again, depending on the level of response and enthusiasm of local participants, current regional funding considerations, and other factors.

Monitoring tool

We are currently updating OFWO's web site (<http://oregonfwo.fws.gov/>) to include subbasin planning as a prominent activity on our agenda. The new specific tab for this issue will offer a brief description of our involvement in subbasin planning and important links to other regional contacts of interest. This site will also offer a real-time chart (Table 1) that provides direct links to useful subbasin maps, current products and documents, and proposed schedules for the completion of different portions of the plans. Through this tool, managers, supervisors, and other regional interests will be able to track progress and activity demands in each of the Oregon subbasins. This monitoring tool will be described in more detail upon completion.