



**Independent Scientific Review Panel**  
for the Northwest Power & Conservation Council  
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**Memorandum (ISRP 2009-49)**

**December 1, 2009**

**To:** W. Bill Booth, Council Chair

**From:** Eric Loudenslager, ISRP Chair

**Subject:** Follow-up review of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation Fish Accord Proposal: Deschutes River Restoration Program, #2008-301-00

### **Background**

This memo is a follow-up to the ISRP's final review of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation Fish Accord proposal, Deschutes River Restoration Program, #2008-301-00 ([ISRP 2009-35](#), August 18, 2009). This project is called for in the Columbia River Fish Accords. The proposal states that "the program will focus on projects aimed at improving instream habitat along with holistic watershed restoration directed at factors limiting salmonid production. Projects will target four broad limiting factors including habitat complexity and quantity, fine sediment, waters temperature, and altered hydrology."

Before this current review, this project had gone through two reviews - an initial proposal review and a response review. On December 15, 2008, the ISRP completed its initial review of the original proposal and sent a memo to the Warm Springs Tribes' (project proponent) requesting additional information that would allow a complete scientific review. On July 28, 2009, the Council sent the ISRP the project proponents' response and requested an ISRP review. On August 18, 2009, the ISRP completed its response review and found that, although there can be benefits to the effort, the proposal did not meet scientific review criteria and greater detail was still needed before a scientific assessment of the proposal could be completed. The ISRP identified five points that needed clarification and also sought detail on ten proposed project sites. The ISRP recommended that the best course of action is for the project proponents to submit a new proposal description that provides the needed detail.

At BPA and the Warm Springs Tribes' request, on October 15, 2009, the ISRP participated in a teleconference with BPA, the Tribes, and Council staff to clarify the issues raised in the ISRP's reviews. The ISRP provided the meeting attendees with summary notes from the meeting, which emphasized the ISRP's request for the project proponents to address the five questions and the request for details on the ten sites that were raised in the August 18 ISRP review.

The ISRP's third review of this project is organized by the six items requested in the August 18 review.

## **ISRP Recommendation**

### *Does Not Meet Scientific Review Criteria*

The ISRP is sensitive to the CTWSR's desire to proceed with steelhead and salmon restoration projects in the Deschutes River subbasin. The existing Deschutes Subbasin Plan and other planning documents have clearly identified a number of environmental problems needing remediation, and this project has the geographic scope to address restoration issues at the landscape scale.

Nevertheless, the supporting documents submitted to us for the first two review iterations did not contain enough technical detail for the ISRP to conduct a review of the scientific basis for each of the proposed restoration actions. This is also true of the current CTWSR response to our August 18, 2009 review and to the October 15, 2009 conference call. We have no doubt that habitat restoration is needed in the lower Deschutes River and tributaries; however, the supporting material available to us remains insufficiently detailed for us to apply the evaluation criteria that we apply to other habitat projects submitted as part of the Columbia River Fish Accords and the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program.

The project proponents during the October 15, 2009 conference call emphasized that this proposal was programmatic in nature and intended to establish an oversight process that would prioritize and execute stream habitat projects over time. This fact does not diminish the problem of insufficient technical detail for those specific projects that were included in the proposal. But even as a programmatic proposal, not enough detail has been provided on the processes and criteria that will be employed to identify future projects to enable a technical evaluation. The description of the monitoring effort to be supported by this program also remains weak. A program intended to provide regional coordination for aquatic habitat restoration requires a comprehensive monitoring program that links project-specific evaluations to existing or proposed monitoring efforts occurring at watershed or subbasin scales. This type of integrated monitoring approach will be necessary to ascertain the cumulative biological effects of restoration undertaken in the program area. No such monitoring framework was provided.

It seems to us that little is gained by entering into another response loop until the environmental planning associated with this project has gone significantly further. The CTWSR is aware of the information needed for the ISRP to review this project scientifically. It would be more efficient and less time-consuming for everyone to complete the planning described in the current response and either re-submit the project description in its entirety or break the project into component site-specific restoration actions and submit those for scientific review as they are ready. The latter approach would facilitate on-the-ground implementation more quickly, but the review process can become cumbersome and redundant.

Again, the ISRP wishes to emphasize that we do not feel that habitat restoration is unwarranted or that individual project sites are not justified in giving this response a Does Not Meet Scientific Criteria evaluation. However, we do feel that additional planning is needed so that we can review project plans, expected environmental benefits to both habitat and target populations, and monitoring efforts.

## ISRP Specific Comments

*1. A reasonably detailed description of what will be done and where the restoration activity will be implemented*

Some additional information was provided for the Quartz Creek and Beaver Creek watersheds. This information was helpful. A map showing the location of the proposed actions relative to fish use of the streams would be especially informative. Hopefully, this kind of information can be presented for all sites. Pre-restoration photographs are also useful.

*2. An explanation or rationale for why this action will be taken at the location in question*

The response gives general justification statements for most of the actions but does not expand on the material submitted previously, except for Quartz and Beaver creeks.

*3. A description of how the action fits into existing restoration priorities that have been established by subbasin plans, species recovery plans, watershed plans, state and Tribal plans, etc.*

The response describes a process of identifying the limiting factors to be addressed by restoration. At this time we have no basis of evaluating their scientific validity until the identification process has been tested. This should be included in a revised proposal.

*4. Completely as possible, an explanation of the benefits of the proposed project to target species*

Egg-to-smolt productivity targets are given from the Columbia River Fish Accords for Beaver Creek, Shitike Creek, and Warm Springs River. These targets are helpful (although their basis was not described) and should be completed for the other restoration locations. The targets will also help to identify what needs to be monitored. A process for relating project-specific habitat monitoring to the productivity targets needs to be developed.

*5. An outline of what will be done to monitor the habitat improvement and population recovery objectives of the restoration action*

The project selection criteria did not provide insight into how the 10 restoration locations were selected and given priority over other candidate sites. General statements were made regarding project location, but we were unable to evaluate these statements scientifically.

The statements made with regard to the Beaver Creek watershed monitoring suggest that some restoration locations will not be monitored at all, and the parameters to be monitored at the other sites have not been finalized. This should be made clear in a revised proposal.

6. *More information on what would be done at the following locations (from the original narrative).*

1. *Trout Creek Fish Habitat Restoration Project*
2. *Squaw Creek Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project*
3. *Middle and Upper Deschutes River Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project*
4. *Lower Crooked River Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project*
5. *Lake Creek and Link Creek Fish Passage Improvement Project*
6. *North Fork Crooked River Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project*
7. *Beaver Creek Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project*
8. *Tygh and Badger Creek Habitat Restoration Project*
9. *Lower Deschutes River Instream and Riparian Habitat Restoration Project*
10. *Pelton Round Butte Fish Passage Restoration Project*

Additional information was provided on site 7 only.