



Independent Scientific Review Panel
for the Northwest Power & Conservation Council
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Memorandum (ISRP 2007-6)

May 29, 2007

To: Tony Grover, Fish and Wildlife Division Director, Northwest Power and Conservation Council

From: Eric Loudenslager, ISRP Chair

Subject: FY 2007-09 Follow-up Review of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Project 199505702

Background

At the Council's April 24, 2007 request, the ISRP reviewed a revised proposal for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Project. This is a follow-up review to the ISRP's final review of the original FY 2007-09 proposal. The ISRP found the original proposal "not fundable" because it did not include a narrative section including the key scientific information needed to justify the proposed actions (see appendix). The ISRP's final comments highlighted the need for a revised proposal to include a comprehensive summary and evaluation of past accomplishments in terms of benefits to fish and wildlife. Subsequently, the Council recommended funding contingent on a favorable ISRP and Council review of a revised proposal that is responsive to the ISRP's concerns. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' revised proposal is intended to meet those conditions, and the ISRP reviewed it with the standard ISRP review criteria.

The revised proposal can be found at:

www.cbfwa.org/solicitation/components/forms/Proposal.cfm?PropID=847

ISRP Recommendation and Summary

Recommendation: Meets Scientific Review Criteria (Qualified)

Much of the background, rationale, and relationships to other projects, partners and biological objectives are now quite well presented for this project.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is mentioned but the monitoring program has only recently begun. The stated intent is to make the M&E plan compatible with the plan for Idaho wildlife

mitigation projects (Unnasch et al. 2003). That said, there must be a plan for evaluation, summarization, and presentation of biological results related to project activities. Data generated by the monitoring plan must be appropriately analyzed and results shared. In future proposals for O&M on parcels for the Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation, more specific information should be provided about what is needed to ensure appropriate habitat quality for the focal species.

The revised proposal states that HEP will be used to evaluate the project. The ISRP has gone on record as having concerns with using HEP for monitoring purposes. In our 1997-2005 Retrospective Report, we “urged the Wildlife program away from a sole emphasis on Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) evaluation and toward more accountability (M&E) for actual wildlife populations” (ISRP 2005-14¹). We again emphasized this point in our Programmatic Comments for our FY 2007-09 project review (ISRP 2006-4a²). The ISRP recommends that HEP should only be used as an initial scoring system for mitigation agreements and should not play any role in biological monitoring.

The revised proposal describes the background, accomplishments, relationships to other projects, and plans for M&E so now meets scientific review criteria (qualified). The ISRP recommendation is qualified because no documentation of benefits to fish and wildlife are provided; no plans for analysis and presentation of results are presented; and work elements to enhance habitat are not clearly linked to existing habitat conditions and landscape features. Documentation and plans should be developed in time to provide the needed information to fully justify the project in the next project selection process.

Specific Comments

1. Technical and/or scientific background

Considerable background on the project and the role of this project are presented. This background includes the amount of land purchased, the land requirements still needed, and expression of a strong interest in purchasing the needed land.

2. Rationale and significance to subbasin plans and regional programs

The importance to the subbasin plan and the associations with other projects are documented.

3. Relationships to other projects

Relationships to other similar projects in the area are specifically noted.

4. Project history

The project history describes the amount of lost habitat and the purchases made to date (and those still needed). The desire to purchase more land (when funds become available) is also described. Partnership is an important part of this project, and partners are mentioned.

¹ www.nwcouncil.org/library/isrp/isrp2005-14.htm

² www.nwcouncil.org/library/isrp/isrp2006-4a.pdf

5. Proposal biological objectives, work elements, and methods

General biological objectives are identified including maintain and enhance available habitat for key species, determine site-specific management, and develop and implement enhancement plans. More specifically, control of invasive and exotic species, restoration of native species, and prevention of trespass are listed. In the future, more explanation should be provided to justify 1) where and why specific activities are necessary, and 2) what is necessary to maintain and enhance habitat quality for focal species. It will also be particularly important to have an effective summary of progress made in enhancing habitat and in prospects for long-term control of invasive species. The revised proposal indicates that implementation of M&E based on published approaches (e.g., noxious weed surveys, bald eagle winter counts) has started.

6. Key personnel, facilities, and equipment

Access to personnel, facilities and equipment are mentioned. However, key personnel are not identified, and responsibilities are not detailed.

7. Information Transfer

Plans for information transfer are not described but are essential (qualified).

8. Benefits to Fish and Wildlife

Benefits are identified in a very general way (acres purchased, etc.). But, documentation of specific benefits to wildlife must be provided in future proposals. In the current proposal the work elements for habitat improvement, such as fencing and invasive-weed control, are not specific enough for the ISRP to establish that the tasks are being executed in the most important places. This concern is the basis for part of the "qualified" recommendation.

Appendix. Final ISRP FY 2007-09 Comments on Project 199505702 - Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation

Sponsor: Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

Province: Upper Snake **Subbasin:** Snake Upper

Sponsor Proposed Budgets: FY07: \$2,050,000 FY08: \$2,050,000 FY09: \$2,050,000

Short description: Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Administration and O&M projects. Continue acquisition of mitigation projects and conduct required operations and maintenance activities on Soda Springs Hills and Rudeen Ranch mitigation projects

ISRP final recommendation: Not fundable

Comment (from response loop):

The proposal did not include any narrative except to describe agreements and administrative processes, and the response likewise did not constitute an actual proposal. Nevertheless, they pulled the cost of acquiring wildlife habitat out of the budget and are now asking for funds to perform O&M at existing sites and to pursue opportunities for future acquisitions. The response does not provide enough information to evaluate the scientific merit of the project.

The sponsors state that past funding provided for a wide variety of habitat protection and enhancement activities and that assessment of habitat improvement activities is being quantified. In addition they note that long-term management plans are being prepared in cooperation with other agencies. Reviewers are told, “detailed description of the activities can be found in project annual reports and work plans submitted to BPA.” A comprehensive summary and evaluation of past accomplishments in terms of benefits to fish and wildlife would be a useful basis for the sponsors to begin formulating a future proposal should they choose to do so.

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