Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST)

State of Oregon

Neil Christensen
Michael J. Harte
Robert M. Hughes
Victor W. Kaczynski
Nancy Molina
Carl Schreck
Carlton Yee

c/o
Oregon State University
Department of Forest Science
321 Richardson Hall
Corvallis OR 97331-5752

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Roy Elicker, Interim Director
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
3406 Cherry Avenue, NE
Salem, OR 97303

Dear Mr. Elicker,

The Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST) is directing a formal recommendation to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) that stems from IMST's reviews of ODFW's draft *Oregon Native Fish Status Review* (December 30, 2005 letter addressed to Ed Bowles, ODFW) and the State of Oregon's draft *Viability Criteria and Status of Oregon Coastal Coho* (March 18, 2005 letter addressed to Michael Carrier, Governor's Natural Resource Office). This recommendation is appended (see Attachment 1).

In the attached recommendation we refer to work conducted by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. An example of this work can be found in a paper accepted for publication in the *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society*. If you would like to access a draft of this paper, please contact Kathy Maas-Hebner (kathleen.maashebner@oregonstate.edu or 541-737-6105) the IMST's lead administrative and technical assistant and she will be pleased to send you a PDF copy of the draft.

As you are aware, Oregon Revised Statute 541.409, requires agencies to respond to recommendations made by the IMST. Responses are generally expected within six months after a recommendation is issued. We are also appending a document (see Attachment 2) that provides information on IMST's process for developing recommendations and for evaluating agency responses. This information may assist your staff in the preparation of ODFW's response.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide clarification on either the intent of our recommendation or the wording of ODFW's response.

Sincerely,

Carl B. Schreck
IMST Co-Chair
(541) 737-1961

Nancy Molina
IMST Co-Chair
(503) 661-6042

Attachments

Cc with attachments:

Mike Carrier, GNRO
Ed Bowles, ODFW
Charlie Corrarino, ODFW
Sen. Frank Shields, Senate Nat. Res. & Alt. Eng. Committee
Rep. Patti Smith, House Ag & Nat. Res. Committee
Kevin Goodson, ODFW
Kelly Moore, ODFW
Stephanie Hallock, DEQ
Laurie Aunan, DEQ
Mary Abrams, DEQ
Greg Sieglitz, OWEB
IMST

Attachment 1

Addendum to:
IMST's December 30, 2005 review of ODFW's draft *Oregon Native Fish Status Report* and March 18, 2005 review of the State of Oregon's draft *Viability Criteria and Status of Oregon Coastal Coho*

Recommendation 1. The Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST) recommends that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) implement probabilistic surveys of key native fish, or Species Management Units, statewide. Such surveys would be similar to those conducted by ODFW for coastal coho salmon and desert redband trout, and by Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) for Yellowstone cutthroat trout, bull trout, and redband trout.

Based on IMST's recent reviews of ODFW's draft *Oregon Native Fish Status Report*[1] and State of Oregon's draft *Viability Criteria and Status of Oregon Coastal Coho* (and related documents, collectively known as the *Oregon Coastal Coho Assessment*[2]), the IMST recommends that ODFW conduct population estimates of key native fish, or Species Management Units, throughout their ranges, plus identifications and counts of all other aquatic vertebrate species collected at the probability sites. Probability surveys would enable ODFW to develop precise and accurate estimates of key fish species, or species management units, if the surveys are sufficiently intense. Recent surveys conducted by the IDFG resulted in population estimates that indicated greater numbers of fish than initially presumed. Additionally, the abundance estimates for all aquatic vertebrate species could be used for estimating ecological condition via indices of biotic integrity (IBIs). Repeated surveys would yield rigorous trend estimates for key species and vertebrate assemblages statewide. Collaborative macroinvertebrate sampling with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality at the same sites would produce an additional assemblage indicator (macroinvertebrate IBI) with minimal additional field cost.

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[1] December 30, 2005 letter addressed to Ed Bowles, ODFW, available at: http://www.fsl.orst.edu/imst/reports/NatFishStatRev_2005.pdf

[2] March 18, 2005 letter addressed to Mike Carrier, GNRO, available at: http://www.fsl.orst.edu/imst/reports/cohoassessment.pdf

Attachment 2

Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST)
Recommendation preamble for use with reports and correspondence
Adopted by the IMST on January 25, 2006

The IMST creates several types of reports[3]. The largest reports are created in response to the IMST's continuing evaluation of the State's science needs necessary to pursue the mission and goals of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (Oregon Plan). These reports are generally topic-oriented and often called "landscape-level reports". An example of this type of report is Technical Report 2002-1, *Recovery of Wild Salmonids in Western Oregon Lowlands*. The landscape-level reports present IMST's independent evaluation of the state of the science regarding the resources being considered and support the evaluations with a comprehensive scientific literature review. These reports also receive extensive peer and technical review[4].

A second type of report the IMST generates is in response to specific requests by the Governor's Office, Legislature, state agency, or other entity to either provide guidance or to review draft reports or proposals involving topics related to the Oregon Plan. An example of this type of report is our 2005 evaluation of the State of Oregon's draft *Viability Criteria and Status Assessment of Oregon Coastal Coho*, the draft *Policy to Evaluate Conservation Efforts (PECE) analysis*, and the draft *Synthesis of Viability Analysis and Evaluation of Conservation Efforts*. A third type of report is called a "letter report" that may be prepared in response to specific questions, such as IMST's 2002 report addressing issues related to instream aggregate (gravel and sand) mining regulated by the Oregon Division of State Lands and how operations may affect salmonid habitat.

In the second and third types of reports, the IMST is often asked whether the scientific approach, analyses, and/or interpretations are credible and consistent with accepted scientific standards, and whether the assumptions and uncertainties are reasonable and accurately characterized. In both of these two types of reports, the IMST generally evaluates the scientific literature being used to support the agency's or State of Oregon's draft report or proposed actions, rather than produce a comprehensive review of available scientific literature.

Depending on the nature of the report being generated (more commonly contained in the landscape-level reports), the IMST may develop a series of scientific questions and answers that help to organize the report and to aid a reader's understanding of the topic. The scientific questions are created by the IMST and are judged to be relevant and useful to understanding the issues, resources or subjects being analyzed. In general, IMST develops and answers each science question, then summarizes its findings and conclusions for each question. Next, the IMST develops recommendations from specific

[3] All three types of reports are an undertaking of the entire Team, although subcommittees are often assigned leading responsibilities; subcommittee composition is based on Team member expertise and interest with topic areas. Minority opinions may be appended or incorporated within any IMST report.
[4] Although technical reports may be subject to technical and peer review, release of draft documents is restricted by the IMST in order to insure accuracy of content prior to release to a wider audience. IMST's policy is stated in the Team's Charter and Operating Guidelines: http://www.fsl.orst.edu/imst/charter.pdf

findings and conclusions or from a synthesis of several findings and conclusions. The recommendations are often grouped into broad subject areas for convenience and the order does not imply priority. The IMST considers each recommendation important to accomplishing the mission and goals of the Oregon Plan.

Recommendations are based on IMST's assessment of the best available science pertaining to salmonid recovery, watershed function and the management of Oregon's natural resources. Recommendations are directed to one or more agencies (or entities) that have the ability to implement, or alter management actions or regulations that are needed for implementation. **The IMST emphasizes that it looks beyond the State's *current* ability to implement the recommendations because current legal, regulatory, or funding situations may need to be modified over time.** The IMST's believes that if an agency (or entity) agrees that a recommendation is technically sound and would aid the recovery of salmonid stocks and watersheds, the agency (or entity) would then determine what impediments might exist to prevent or delay implementation and work toward eliminating those impediments. The IMST also assumes that each agency (or entity) has the knowledge and expertise to determine how best to identify and eliminate impediments to implementation and to determine appropriate time frames and goals needed to meet the intent of the recommendation. The IMST also recognizes that an agency (or entity) may already have ongoing activities that address a particular recommendation; therefore, inclusion of such an "overlapping" recommendation should be seen as reinforcement for the continuation of such actions.

Formal Responses to Recommendations

Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 541.409, which created the IMST, specifies that agencies are to respond to the recommendations of the IMST, stating "(3) If the Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team submits suggestions to an agency responsible for implementing a portion of the Oregon Plan, the agency shall respond to the Team explaining how the agency intends to implement the suggestion or why the agency does not intend to implement the suggestion". State agencies are expected to formerly respond to IMST recommendations within six months after a report is issued.

Once formal responses are received, the IMST reviews the scientific adequacy of each response and determines if further action or consideration by the agency (or entity) is warranted. Ultimately, each recommendation response is assigned to one of four general categories:

- **Adequate** means that the IMST supports the decision of the agency
- **Intermediate** means that the IMST does not fully support the agency decision because the decision will decrease the likelihood of accomplishing the goals of the Oregon Plan in a timely manner, but not doom it to failure. IMST notes its concerns but stops short of suggesting that the recommendation be reconsidered.
- **Inadequate** means that the IMST feels the decision by the agency will seriously detract from achieving the goals of the Oregon Plan, and the IMST strongly suggests that the decision be reconsidered.

- **Indeterminate** means that IMST cannot tell what the agency decided to do with the recommendation, or lacks sufficient information to fully evaluate the response.

IMST believes that the key characteristics of a good response are:

- It includes a short, clear statement that the agency (or entity) (a) accepts or agrees with the recommendation or (b) that it rejects or disagrees with it. In some cases, an agency (or entity) may be reluctant to agree or accept a recommendation because it sees significant difficulties in implementing it. However IMST believes if the recommendation is sound, then the agency (or entity) should work towards eliminating the impediments to implementation that it sees.
- It provides short, clear descriptions of what the agency (or entity) intends to do to implement recommendations it accepts (including how it might remove impediments) or, as required by ORS 541.409, that it provides specific reasons why it rejects the recommendations. Discussion betweens agency or legislative staff and Team members at IMST meetings should also help clarify agency (or entity) and IMST perspectives, and most importantly, advance the mission and goals of the Oregon Plan.

Responses that include these characteristics will be more easily characterized by IMST as ***Adequate, Intermediate*** or ***Inadequate***, avoiding the use of ***Indeterminate.***

The IMST evaluations of the responses are then delivered to each responding state agency (or entity) and the agency (or entity) has an opportunity to discuss the IMST evaluations of their responses. Agencies (or entities) are also encouraged to update the IMST their progress on implementing recommendations.

Finally, IMST includes any formal responses to recommendations and IMST's evaluation of the responses in its reports to the Governor and the State Legislature (e.g., Joint Committee on Salmon and Stream Enhancement or other natural resource committees as appropriate).