Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST)

State of Oregon

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Mike Carrier
Natural Resources Policy Director
Oregon Governor's Office
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047

Dear Mr. Carrier,

Members of the Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST) have recently reviewed several recovery plans for Oregon salmonids. Common to these is the recognition of importance of the ocean as a major limiting factor about which almost nothing is known. In addition, given the latest data available about lower than expected returns of Oregon coastal coho and Sacramento River fall Chinook salmon the members of the IMST feel obliged to write to you in the context of the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health (October 19, 2007 Draft Action Plan).

The IMST is a seven-member statutory committee of scientists from a broad spectrum of scientific disciplines established in 1997 as part of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (Oregon Plan). The IMST provides independent, impartial advice on scientific matters to the State of Oregon, primarily through scientific review of work done by Oregon Plan partner agencies, and through development of reports on the science dimensions of important natural resources issues that arise in implementation of the Oregon Plan.

The IMST strongly supports the Agreement's priority areas and in particular, expanding ocean and coastal scientific information, research, and monitoring. The IMST also supports the related action of developing a regional research priority plan to improve scientific understanding of ocean resources and processes in the eastern Pacific Ocean, especially its coasts and estuaries. As such the IMST is directing a formal recommendation to the State of Oregon through the Governor's Natural Resource Office (GNRO). The recommendation is appended (see Attachment 1).

As you are aware, Oregon Revised Statute 541.409 requires agencies and state entities 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 you and your staff while preparing GNRO'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 GNRO's response.

Sincerely,

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Attachments

Cc with attachments:

Jessica Hamilton, GNRO
Sue Knapp, GNRO
Roy Elicker, ODFW
Sen. Alan C. Bates, Interim Senate Env. & Nat. Res. Cmmte.
Rep. Jackie Dingfelder, Interim House Eng. & Env. Cmmte.
Rep. Arnie Roblan, Interim House Ag & Nat. Res. Cmmte.
IMST

Attachment 1

Recommendation to the State of Oregon

The Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team recommends that the State of Oregon ensure that the *West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health's* priority area of expanding ocean and coastal scientific information, research, and monitoring explicitly include provisions for an interstate and international ocean research program to determine the major causes of and variability in ocean mortality of anadromous salmonids.

This priority area of the Agreement explicitly address research targeted at better understanding the factors affecting ocean survival of anadromous salmonids.
Given the influence of ocean survival on anadromous salmonids, the IMST believes it is advisable to begin an interstate and international ocean research program targeted at determining the major causes of and variability in ocean mortality. If changes in primary and secondary productivity, disease, competition, and predation that affect various phases of salmonid life cycles in the ocean can be better understood and monitored, management actions can be improved and better targeted.

At a minimum, managers may be able to predict good and bad ocean survival years earlier, as opposed to responding to the final year of a declining trend. Effective adaptive management of anadromous salmonids must begin to treat the ocean as something other than a black box. To be successful, such a research program must involve researchers and support from relevant agencies and research organizations.

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[1]. 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[2].

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 an 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

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[1] 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.

[2] 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).