



USDA Forest Service
Northern Region
Intermountain Region
Pacific Northwest Region



USDI Bureau of Land Management
Washington/Oregon State Office
Idaho State Office

Reply Refer To: 2670(FS)/6841 (OR-930) P (BLM)

Date: July 18, 2007

EMS TRANSMISSION 07/18/2007

FS-Memorandum

BLM-Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2007-071

To: Forest Supervisors: Regions 1, 4, 6
Bureau of Land Management District Managers: MT, ID, OR/WA
(with PACFISH or INFISH amended Management Plans or via BLM Letter of Direction)

Subject: Clarification of NMFS and USFWS 1998 Biological Opinion Requirements for Completing Watershed Analysis (PACFISH, INFISH) and Subbasin Assessments (PACFISH only)

In March 2007, the Interior Columbia Basin, Interagency Deputy Team agreed that an update to a previous clarification letter (July 29, 2004) that addressed implementation of the 1998 United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries (NOAA) Biological Opinions was warranted. In 2004, the Deputy Team adopted the recommendation to leave in place the legal obligations from the 1998 Opinions for watershed analysis and subbasin assessments until Land & Resource Management Plans were amended or revised. Both the 1998 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and USFWS Opinions require the use of the 1995 Federal Guide (Version 2.2) for watershed analysis. Only the 1998 NMFS Biological Opinion, covering the 1995 PACFISH amendment to existing Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Land & Resource Management Plans, requires that one watershed analysis and one subbasin assessment each be completed per year on each administrative unit (National Forest, BLM District).

The purpose of this letter is to review the 1998 Opinion obligations related to watershed analysis and subbasin assessments, clarify their objectives, and provide options for meeting these requirements, including participation in development of salmon & steelhead recovery plans and continued oversight of plan implementation (attachment). We strongly encourage you to work with your counterparts in the streamlining process to develop both a schedule and list of priorities for completing watershed analyses, and where applicable, subbasin assessments.

Please refer to the enclosed attachment for the clarification as outlined above. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Linda Ulmer, FS and BLM Columbia River Basin Coordinator, at 503-808-2929.

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Attachment(s)

1 – Watershed Analysis (3pp)

cc:

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Mike Crouse, NOAA-Fisheries
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BLM Distribution

ID-930 (Susan Giannettino)
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ATTACHMENT 1

WATERSHED ANALYSIS

What is Watershed Analysis and what do the 1998 USFWS and NMFS Opinions require?

Watershed analysis is a procedure used to characterize the human, aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial features, conditions, processes, and interactions (ecosystem elements) within a watershed. It provides a systematic way to understand and organize ecosystem information. The 1998 USFWS (INFISH) and NMFS (PACFISH) Biological Opinions require use of the 1995 Federal Guide (Version 2.2) for watershed analysis. Only the 1998 NMFS Opinion requires each FS and BLM administrative unit to complete one per year.

What are the objectives of Watershed analysis and associated benefits to Line Managers?

1. Evaluate cumulative watershed effects - *watershed analysis enhances the ability to estimate direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of management activities*
2. Define watershed restoration needs, goals and objectives – *provides guidance on the general type, location, and sequence of appropriate activities within a watershed.*
3. Monitor the effectiveness of watershed protection measures – *iterative process for adaptive management feedback loop.*
4. Provide sufficient watershed context for understanding and carrying out land use activities within a geomorphic context – *important tool used in meeting management objectives at larger scales*

What is the appropriate methodology(s) for conducting Watershed Analysis?

As described in the 1998 Biological Opinions (NMFS, USFWS), administrative units should continue to rely on the 1995 Federal Guide for Watershed Analysis, Version 2.2. (rev. August, 1995) titled [Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale](#)¹ until FS and BLM Land Management Plans are amended or revised. EAWS or the Six-Step Process is a “tool box” of analytical methods and techniques designed to help address various aspects of watershed analysis and meet the aquatic goals and objectives described in PACFISH, INFISH, and requirements of the 1998 Opinions.

What are the Deputy Team’s Expectations for Line Managers for Completing Watershed Analyses?

- Each Forest Supervisor and BLM District Manager is responsible for completing one watershed analysis per year* until PACFISH is replaced through Plan revision or amendment {*NMFS’s 1998 Opinion requirement to complete one subbasin assessment per year on each unit ONLY applies to National Forest and BLM Districts with anadromous fish where plans have been amended by PACFISH and the 1998 anadromous fish biological opinion is applicable*}.
- Use an Interagency (states, tribes, public stakeholders as appropriate) and/or Interdisciplinary team, as appropriate.
- Although use of the 1995 Federal Guide is required for all watershed analyses, line managers will define the scope, intensity, and depth of analysis based on the complexity of the management or resource issue.
- The 1995 Federal Guide provides line managers with the flexibility to focus the analysis as appropriate. *Line managers, guiding a analysis, are responsible for balancing the number and scope of the issues addressed, dependent on available staffing and funding levels.* We want to emphasize that watershed analyses can be a very simple and straightforward process taking a

¹ The links go to www.fs.fed.us/r6/fish and www.icbemp.gov/implement/example.shtml

few days or weeks to develop or a complicated process. The complexity is intertwined with the issues and questions being addressed.

What can be used to meet this Watershed Analysis requirement?

Depending on the option selected below, results (watershed analysis, subbasin assessments, recovery plan) should be applied at the appropriate scale

Options*:

1. **Completion of one watershed analysis per year² until PACFISH is replaced through Plan revision or amendment;**
2. **Update to an existing watershed analysis;**
3. **Technical staff participation in local forums for development of NMFS's 'domain' recovery plans. Specifically, providing accurate and timely current condition information for federal lands, and identifying limiting factors and future actions needed to meet {recovery} plan goals and objectives;**

Identification of the option (1-3) selected by the Line Manager and accompanying short narrative will be required to be documented in annual Deputy Team *Line Manager Certification Reports

SUBBASIN-SCALE ASSESSMENT
(1998 NMFS Biological Opinion Only)

What is it?

A subbasin-scale assessment provides the perspective necessary to determine which watersheds should be prioritized for subsequent watershed analysis.

What are the objectives of Subbasin-scale assessments and associated benefits to Line Managers?

1. Provides an appropriate ecological and social (place-based) context for identifying priority watersheds for integration of multiple resource objectives, and the conservation and restoration of aquatic and terrestrial species and habitats. *This objective is consistent with the Interior Columbia Basin Strategy (e.g., use of hierarchical analysis consistent with ICBEMP Science step-down process)*
2. Development of goals and objectives that can be incorporated into action plans at the watershed scale. *Provides a mechanism for identifying multiple resource goals and objectives that can be integrate, maximizing efficiencies at the watershed scale in planning and implementation*
3. Enhanced linkage with other state and tribal assessment efforts at this scale, including the NW Power and Conservation Council's Subbasin Planning effort, in setting priorities across administrative boundaries for restoration of aquatic and terrestrial habitats needed for recovery of ESA-listed species.

² For scattered tracts of BLM and NFS lands, the majority landowner should collaborate with the other federal land management agency to complete watershed analysis and subbasin assessments. For small tracts of federal lands associated with high value salmonid habitats, we encourage use of a focused analysis at the reach, watershed, or subbasin scales using approaches described in this attachment.

What is the appropriate methodology(s) for conducting Subbasin Assessments?

NMFS's 1998 Opinion required that subbasin assessments adhere to defined protocols, mutually agreed upon by the USFS, BLM, and NMFS. Protocols identified in the 1998 Opinion (p.90) for subbasin assessments included (1) [South Fork Clearwater River assessment methods and procedures](#) , (2) procedures developed by [Kerry Overton \(FS-RMRS, Yankee Fork\)](#), or (3) other jointly agreed upon procedures: ***either*** 1) Level 1 or 2 team has agreed to an alternate procedure that meets subbasin-scale assessment goals and objectives; ***or*** 2) it is a process that has been developed for an individual *NMFS 'domain' recovery planning effort* to assess current condition, identify limiting factors, priority populations and {recovery} actions.

What are the Expectations for Line Managers in completing Subbasin Scale Assessments?

- Each National Forest and BLM District Manager is responsible for completing one subbasin assessment per year^{1,2} until PACFISH is replaced through Plan revision or amendment {*NMFS's 1998 Opinion requirement to complete one subbasin assessment per year on each unit ONLY applies to National Forest and BLM Districts with anadromous fish where plans have been amended by PACFISH and the 1998 anadromous fish biological opinion is applicable*}. **For FY07 and beyond, Line Manager and technical staff participation in development and implementation of NMFS 'domain' recovery plans meets this requirement**
- If completing a Subbasin Scale Assessment, use an Interagency (states, tribes, public stakeholders as appropriate) and/or Interdisciplinary team, as appropriate.
- Line Managers will use the results of subbasin assessments to prioritize watersheds for further analysis and identify goals and objectives at the watershed scale.

What can be used to meet this Subbasin- Scale Analysis requirement?

Options*:

1. Completion of one subbasin assessment per year² until PACFISH is replaced through plan revision or amendment;
2. Line Managers and/or technical staff participation in development of salmon and steelhead recovery plans;
3. Continued participation in local forums responsible for oversight of recovery plan implementation and use of recovery plans to prioritize watersheds for further analysis and identify goals and objectives at the watershed scale.

***Identification of the option (1-3) selected by the Line Manager with accompanying short narrative will be required to be documented in annual Deputy Team *Line Manager Certification Reports*).**