



FISH PASSAGE CENTER

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Russell Scranton

FROM: Michele DeHart

DATE: January 4, 2013

RE: Use of Monitoring Methods by the Fish Passage Center

In 2012, the Fish Passage Center staff dedicated a significant amount of time to entering the methods and protocols for the Smolt Monitoring Program (SMP) and the Comparative Survival Study (CSS) into the Monitoring Methods website, monitoringmethods.org. Our overall conclusion is that Monitoring Methods is not suitable for large, region-wide monitoring projects such as the SMP and the CSS. All FPC materials are currently in Monitoring Methods, but are not finalized because of the extensive administrative work that must be completed by Monitoring Methods staff.

Because the FPC has many contract deliverables and limited staff, we do not believe that expending additional staff time on monitoringmethods.org is a prudent use of FPC expertise. The SMP, CSS and FPC Annual reports are subject to annual regional review and annual review by the Independent Scientific Advisory Board. All data, methods, analyses and metadata are available on the FPC website in a very timely manner. Because of the limitations inherent with the monitoringmethods.org website, we believe that the FPC website provides clearer descriptions, methods, data, and metadata about FPC projects than it is possible to present through monitoringmethods.org. Inquiries about the SMP, CSS and FPC monitoring activities should be made directly to the FPC rather than through a third-party intermediary.

We have found the Monitoring Methods program to be cumbersome and difficult to use efficiently, especially for procedures that are already well documented elsewhere. Please note this summary of difficulties we have experienced.

- All references to species used and locations are expected to be removed from methods. However, many of our methods require these references. For example, in some CSS analyses Steelhead and Chinook data are analyzed slightly differently due to differences in life history. Location references should be included because many dam sites have different designs and different juvenile bypass facilities, which drives differences in sampling and analytical techniques used. These distinctions exemplify the fact the actual monitoring and research completed by the Fish Passage Center do not fit cleanly into the “Methods” and “Protocols” distinctions required by Monitoring Methods.
- We find the requirement of “step-by-step” instructions in methods- including the labeling of methods with “Step 1”, “Step 2”, etc.- to be tedious and inconsistent with standards of scientific reporting. In documents generated at the FPC, methods are reported and reviewed as scientific works, which allow for the citation of widely accepted methods in the field and do not require the assumption that the reader has no experience with the species or system in question. FPC methods are used for the training of those working for and with the FPC in data collection and analyses and have always proven to be informative and useful.
- Although there are many methods already in the program, searching through these to find the one that most closely resembles our methods is time consuming. After finding a similar method, it is necessary to read it in extreme detail and then correct any small differences. This takes significantly longer than entering an entirely new method, although it is labeled as a time saving device.
- Despite the fact that many analytical methods should involve some mathematical techniques, equations cannot be entered into methods. To include equations, screen shots need to be taken of all equations and uploaded as images. This greatly increases the time required to enter methods, and decreases the usefulness of entering these kinds of methods into the system at all.
- No formatting, including bold, italics, underlining, and super- and sub-scripts, can be used in the methods. This can make it extremely difficult to review submitted work, especially those involving text such as °C, which must read as oC.
- Some metrics used in the CSS report are extremely basic, and boil down to basic arithmetic. These methods are outlined in the CSS report, but it is unclear what should constitute an analytical method in Monitoring Methods.
- Because all methods are required to be of “Published” status within Monitoring Methods before protocols can be “Published”, we have been unable to move forward with our documentation. The status of methods that we have proposed to “publish” is unavailable, so we have no way of completing our requirements in a timely manner.

Despite these complications, our staff has spent extensive time and effort to meet the documentation requirements of Monitoring Methods. This has included attending training sessions, considerable time figuring out the requirements of the website, frequent frustration in entering information, and many requests for help from Monitoring Methods staff. We suggest that if additional information is required, interested parties can be steered to our website, www.fpc.org, where all documentation is easily and freely available to the public.