

**Meeting Date:** 11/16/2023

**Agenda Item No. 16**

**Agenda Item:** Technical Assistance Program Update    **Deputy Director Approval:**

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**Update and Progress:**

In 2021, the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) merged into the newly formed Technical Services Bureau. The TAP contributes to the Department's mission and strategic core values by disseminating credible science-based knowledge to inform decisions to benefit fish, wildlife, and botanical resources, and associated recreation. In FY2023, TAP responded to over 2,700 technical assistance requests statewide. The following are examples of priority TAP projects:

- Reviewed water right applications for the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Basin Adjudication.
- Developed a Spring Valley Reservoir water right to increase water storage for steelhead.
- Assisted on the Owyhee River Restoration Project to benefit sage-grouse and Redband Trout habitat.
- Worked with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on Travel Planning efforts.
- Engaged stakeholders to improve conditions for wintering elk and mule deer in the Wood River Valley.
- Advised the Sand Creek Desert Collaborative to improve sage-grouse and big game habitat.

Consistent with the Department's Technical Assistance Procedure (DIR-3.0), the Department has responsibilities to ensure that effective stewardship of the state's fish and wildlife resources is compatible with other business of the State to promote the safety, health, and welfare of Idaho citizens. In doing so, the Department implements a solution-oriented approach to technical assistance consistent with policymaking roles of the Fish and Game Commission, other executive branch agencies, and the State's Legislative and Judicial branches. Accordingly, the Department extensively coordinates technical assistance activities with the Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources (OEMR), Governor's Office of Species Conservation (OSC), and other State agencies. The following are current high-profile examples for which TAP, OEMR, OSC, and other state agencies are collaboratively engaged:

- Stibnite Gold Mine Project
- Relicensing of hydropower projects
- Lava Ridge Wind Project
- Oneida and Corral Summit pump storage hydroelectric projects
- State-of-Idaho sage-grouse Alternative for BLM land use planning
- Boardman-to-Hemingway Transmission Line and Crow Creek Pipeline

**TAP Operations:**

TAP operates with 14 staff members: Bureau Chief, two Program Coordinators, two Botanists, two Spatial Ecologists, and seven Regional Technical Assistance Managers. In coordination with the Technical Services Bureau and Director's Office, Regional Supervisors oversee regional TAP implementation. Regional Technical Assistance Managers are the primary TAP points-of-contact in the regions and coordinate with other regional staff members to assist with technical

assistance workloads and responsibilities. The Technical Services Bureau, in coordination with the Director's Office, often leads technical assistance efforts that span multiple regions.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:**

Per Idaho Code § 36-103, the Commission administers the State's policy to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage fish and wildlife resources to be available to the citizens of Idaho for continued supplies for hunting, fishing, and trapping. The Technical Assistance Procedure DIR-3.0 within the Department's Procedures Manual guides TAP implementation and operations.

**Public Involvement Process:**

The Department provides technical assistance as requested to entities conducting public decision-making processes about resource management planning, projects, and actions that might affect fish, wildlife, and botanical resources, and associated recreation.

**Justification:**

It is important that the Commission be informed about TAP's efforts to leverage Department data and staff knowledge to inform external decision-makers and stakeholders about opportunities to conserve Idaho's fish, wildlife, and botanical resources.

**Staff Recommendation:**

This update is provided for Commission information.

**Suggested Motion:**

No Commission action is required.