

2003 mainstem comment

Washington State Horticultural Association
P.O. Box 136
Wenatchee, WA 98807
(509) 665-9641, fax (509) 665-8541

June 7, 2001

Re: NPPC Fish and Wildlife Program Amendments, Support for the New Water Management Alternative for the Columbia River Basin

There is no issue more important to the health of Washington State's economy than water and access to adequate water supplies. As one of the main representatives of Washington's diverse tree fruit industry, the Washington State Horticultural Association is concerned about water operations, water supplies and fish issues in Eastern Washington. We are interested in finding workable solutions rather than penalizing people.

It's doubtful that current policies and programs will adequately address the current or future needs of water users. For example, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) imposition of a "regional, no net loss water policy." NMFS motives in the Methow Valley appear questionable. Recent third-party lawsuits targeted toward NMFS, USBR, the Corps and others will likely prolong conflict rather than produce meaningful solutions. We can do a better job. It's time for a new strategy and a new program that addresses the needs of all water users, providing environmental and economic benefits.

We believe the "New Water Management Alternative" for the Columbia Basin drainage area offers the region a well-balanced solution to water management - bringing forward a technical and economic basis to improve the use of existing water resources.

We support this proposal for a New Water Management Alternative and applaud how the proposal would take our existing water resources and create new benefits for fish and people. Strategically, we see how elements of the program can be directly applied to meet the needs of numerous Eastern Washington basins.

If we pursue the New Water Management Alternative proposal, then we open the door to several important opportunities:

1. Eliminating needless and unproductive threats to state and privately held water rights.
2. Focusing water management actions toward measurable fish and social benefits within watersheds and tributaries; restructure an unsuccessful water management regime that mis-allocates water resources.
3. Providing adequate funding for new water resource/efficiency projects by restructuring the mainstem Columbia River flow regimes - new funding sources are not required.
4. Advancing new water resources projects within river basins, including new storage projects; locally controlled water transfers, changes, water marketing; and selected water efficiency projects.
5. Ensuring that tribal treaty rights are protected, and that the tribes have an ability to be equity partners with others in developing new water projects.

To date, we have not reviewed any option or measure that does a better job of forging a comprehensive solution to water issues, than that posed by the New Water Management Alternative. This proposal takes into account regional water management, state water policy, fish needs, tribal rights and economic concerns, and the future well-being of our local communities.

The New Water Management Alternative deserves to be a priority amendment for the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, and it should be the blueprint for the development of new state water supply actions. We encourage you to adopt it and promote its merits within state and region decision-making forums.

The New Water Management Alternative generates opportunities for all water users. It forms a policy based on mutual cooperation and respect, and has the potential to deliver real results.

Sincerely,

James M. Hazen
Executive Director

cc: U.S. Senators Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Representatives Doc Hastings, George Nethercutt

Please accept my following comment concerning the Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.

I urge that all streams be restored to a natural environment and to repair and restore all salmon habitat areas with a complete watershed preservation program to establish major areas as fish, wildlife, plan and habitat preserves and to remove/obliterate this basin's dams.

Sincerley,

John R. Swanson