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October 15, 2010

Mr. William C. Maslen
Manager, Fish and Wildlife Division
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208

Dear Mr. Maslen:

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the Council's decision on a 2008 Willamette Project Biological Opinions (BiOp) project. This recommendation was made by the Council at its meeting on October 14, 2010.

In addition, a purpose of this letter is to inform the project sponsor and other interested parties of the status of this Council action. The following is a summary of the action taken by the Council at the meeting in October.

Willamette Bi-Op Habitat Restoration, Project #2009-012-00

On May 28, 2010, Bonneville and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) submitted a project intended to address specific Reasonable and Prudent Action (RPA) habitat needs identified in the 2008 Willamette Project Biological Opinions (i.e., NMFS 2008¹, and USFWS 2008²) for Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) review. This is a new start and is intended to be a comprehensive approach to prioritizing and funding efforts to restore native fish and wildlife habitat in the Willamette River and its floodplain below the major federal hydro projects.

On June 23, 2010, the ISRP requested additional information from the proponents in order to determine whether the proposal met scientific criteria (ISRP document 2010-22). No public comment was received on the ISRP review.

¹ NMFS 2008. Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(2) Consultation Biological Opinion & Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation on the "Willamette River Basin Flood Control Project."

² USFWS 2008. Biological Opinion On the Continued Operation and Maintenance of the Willamette River Basin Project and Effects to Oregon Chub, Bull Trout, and Bull Trout Critical Habitat Designated Under the Endangered Species Act. As Proposed by: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Department of Army) Bonneville Power Administration (Department of Energy) and Bureau of Reclamation (Department of Interior).

The ISRP requested additional detail on the following:

- a more complete description of how existing habitat projects have been implemented and how successful they have been in the mainstem Willamette River, including biological responses, if known,
- details about the objectives, work elements, methods, and metrics (in particular, more detail about the specific criteria that will be used to prioritize projects), and
- some site-specific details about the BiOp RM&E plan.

On July 21, 2010 the Council received a response from OWEB and on August 25, 2010 the Council received the ISRP's final review (ISRP document 2010-29). The ISRP found that the proposal met scientific review criteria ("qualified").

The ISRP appreciated the information received from the proponent addressing the items outlined above. Though, as part of their final review, the ISRP provided a meets science review criteria ranking it was qualified based on additional needs for the M&E plan. The ISRP requested greater detail, including procedures for implementation, status and trend, and effectiveness monitoring at appropriate spatial scales, and how this project will inform adaptive management. The ISRP provided specific needs (e.g., metrics and methods) and also mentioned the importance of the need to coordinate closely with toxics researchers as it relates to the defined water quality monitoring efforts. The ISRP stated that this final M&E plan should be complete in the first year for review.

In addition, the ISRP is would like to see progress reports and that there is close coordination with other BiOp restoration activities that overlap spatially (i.e., Columbia River Estuary - CREST, project #2010-004-00). It is important to note that this proposal will be included in the anticipated geographical categorical review (Habitat) that will provide the region an opportunity for the proponent to provide an update on the project's progress and relation to other restoration efforts.

Based on the ISRP review, the Council supports implementation of this project in Fiscal Year 2011. This recommendation requires that OWEB provide a final M&E plan for review prior to the 2012 field season.

Sincerely,

Tony Grover
Director, Fish and Wildlife Division

cc: Jamae Hilliard Creecy, BPA
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