



May 28, 2004

Judi Danielson, Chair
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

Subject: Support for Submission of May 2004 Version of the Asotin, Lower Snake,
Tucannon and Walla Walla subbasin plans

Dear Chair Danielson,

Through this correspondence, the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board (the Board) provides general support for submission of the May 2004 Version of the Asotin, Lower Snake, Tucannon and Walla Walla subbasin plans to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (the Council). The Board self-initiated in 2002 to oversee development of the Snake River regional salmon recovery plan with the State of Washington's guidance and support. The Board is comprised of 21 voting members from the five counties in the recovery region and includes representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Tribe. The Board believes that participation of all communities and stakeholders in the recovery planning process is essential.

Although the Board is providing general support for submission of the May 2004 Version of the subbasin plans, governmental entities and stakeholders that comprise this Board may likely submit formal comments to the Council during the public comment period ending August 12, 2004. For example, the Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will continue to review the May 2004 Version of the subbasin plans to determine if they are consistent with tribal management actions and treaty rights, as required by section 4 of the Northwest Power Act.

Development of the subbasin plans was a collaborative effort led by the Asotin County Conservation District (Asotin Subbasin), Columbia Conservation District (Tucannon Subbasin), Pomeroy Conservation District (Lower Snake Mainstem Subbasin), and Walla Walla County/Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council (Walla Walla Subbasin). The plans integrate the perspectives of fish and wildlife managers, land managers, local governments, biologists and other scientists, landowners, interest groups, and the general public. The plans represent a step forward in collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting data, as well as in prioritizing restoration and protection activities for aquatic and terrestrial species and

habitats. The Board acknowledges that this collaborative process incorporated the best available science, given the limiting constraints of time and funding.

In addition, the Board recognizes that these versions of the subbasin plans are a snapshot in time. They will be revised and evolve over time. Regardless, they should be used to guide ongoing and potential fish and wildlife restoration and protection activities. The Board believes that coordination and communication of implementation is critical and that implementation needs to be focused towards on-the-ground actions.

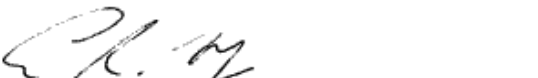
As you know, the Board is currently in the process of developing a recovery plan for salmonids listed under the Endangered Species Act in the applicable portions of the Snake and Mid-Columbia Evolutionary significant units. This includes areas in the Asotin, Lower Snake, Tucannon and Walla Walla subbasins located in the State of Washington. Species addressed will include sockeye, spring/summer chinook, fall chinook, steelhead and bull trout. Much work yet remains on synthesizing information across these subbasins to develop relationships and strategies between the four risk factors (hydropower, hatcheries, harvest and habitat) and the actions necessary to achieve delisting, and more importantly, healthy, harvestable populations. Therefore, it is the Board's intent to rely heavily on the assessments, biological objectives, and strategies developed in the May 2004 Version of these subbasin plans for the habitat component of the recovery plans.

The Board believes that building the recovery plans from community and agency supported products like subbasin plans will prove to be an efficient and effective strategy. Delisting threatened and endangered fish, and establishing healthy, harvestable populations will require unprecedented commitments from the funding and regulatory agencies, as well as from affected stakeholders and the general public. Implementation will occur over many years; therefore, maintaining continuity, consistency and oversight at the regional level throughout the recovery planning horizon is essential.

If you have questions or comments regarding this correspondence, please contact the Board's Director, Steve Martin, at 509-382-4115.

Sincerely,


Jay Holzmilller


Eric Myers