



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

January 26, 2017

In reply refer to: EW-4

Mr. Tony Grover
Fish and Wildlife Division Director
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW Sixth Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

Dear Mr. Grover:

We are writing to provide comment on the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO) John Day River Watershed Restoration Strategy (Strategy), which guides the CTWSRO restoration program. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) supports the CTWSRO in their efforts to implement fish habitat projects in the John Day Basin identified in the Accords.

The Strategy provides a framework for ranking and selecting habitat improvement projects for the John Day Watershed Restoration program (BPA # 2007-397-00). BPA believes this framework is necessary in order to provide a transparent, science-based process to review and rank proposed restoration actions. The process identified in the Strategy will ensure that restoration projects implemented through the John Day Watershed Restoration Program will provide significant biological benefits to ESA-listed and other focal fish species as well as meet the intent of the Accords and the current BiOp. The effectiveness of any ranking strategy to maximize benefits to fish and wildlife and their habitats lies in the collaboration and participation among interested parties, including willing private landowners.

The John Day Watershed Restoration Program has a long track record of working with basin stakeholders including private landowners in accomplishing meaningful, beneficial projects on the ground that have benefitted both the landowner and the aquatic resources. We are aware that some criticism, as well as support, of the CTWSRO Strategy has been presented to the Council from collaborators, stakeholders, and private landowners. It is important for the continued success of the restoration program that collaboration and good on-the-ground work continues in a productive and mutually respectful atmosphere in the John Day Subbasin. This has been key to the CTWSRO and other resource managers' success to date.

BPA believes that the concept of a working landscape, where land use practices are supported while also advancing fish mitigation, is critical to sustain local support and provide continued biological benefit to John Day spring Chinook salmon and summer steelhead populations. We

are committed to this approach and will work with all stakeholders to help where we can. Based on comments and letters received, it seems better communication and transparency is needed to ensure this is being met. The work should not be confrontational and the private landowners, partners, and communities of the basin should welcome the support that the CTWSRO continues to bring to the John Day Subbasin. The Strategy ranking and funding process has been implemented for two funding cycles, providing funding for nearly 50 reviewed and ranked projects in local communities across three counties. These projects increase aquatic habitat consistent with the intent of the Accords and the BiOp and also provide landowners improved irrigation efficiencies and water delivery certainty.

We look forward to working with the CTWSRO and partners to resolve any potential issues regarding the Strategy and to ensure the continued implementation of high quality, cost efficient, and scientifically sound fish habitat restoration projects in the John Day Basin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Stier', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeffrey K. Stier
Acting Executive Manager
Fish and Wildlife Program

cc: (electronic)

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