

ISRP High Priority Review  
Response to ISRP Comments  
Project ID: 23084  
Acquisition of Lower Desolation Creek, John Day Basin

Comment #1: “There is some confusion over the extent of stream habitat involved. In the short description, 11 miles of streams are indicated while in the text, 17 miles are mentioned.”

Response: Within this acquisition there are 11 miles of Desolation Creek proper and another 6 miles of documented anadromous tributaries to Desolation Creek for a total of 17 miles of anadromous streams.

Comment #2: “ It is unclear if there are water rights associated with this property...?”

Response: There are no water rights associated with this property. The property is 95% surrounded by U.S. Forest Service property. Desolation Creek as well as other tributaries on the property either flow from the Forest Service lands or originate on the property. A map of the area and associated streams is attached in Appendix A.

Comment # 3: The proposal is weak in that it does not sufficiently develop the O+M and M+E components.

Response:

### **O+M**

This project represents the permanent protection of critical anadromous fish habitat stronghold and associated terrestrial wildlife habitats. As with all such large-scale habitat acquisitions projects, a detailed project planning and public involvement effort will be done to develop a long-term management plan. This plan will contain the details of protection and restoration strategies, operations and maintenance and monitoring and evaluation. Initial efforts will include “interim management” activities to assure protection of the resources from ongoing threats.

This is a large tract that has been managed for commodity production including livestock forage and timber harvest. Removing the land from grazing in this area traditionally leaves a severe weed problem for the first 3-5 years. The Tribe will want to address this weed problem in the most environmentally sound way possible. Interim weed control would focus on controlling new infestations and addressing vector sources such as roadways. This would require that weeds be dealt with by hand removal or individual backpack spaying.

The area has been logged and grazed. We will expect to do extensive native plant community restoration including planting of native shrubs and trees in riparian areas and upland sites as well as restoration of native wetland and grassland/forb communities. We will expect this planting to take place over the course of several years in conjunction with control of non-native invasive species. This will require that some plants from the site be propagated at nursery locations and planted in later years. Other stocks of local natural shrubs, vegetation and trees will be taken and

or enhanced on site.

At this point it is impossible to break down the exact cost of O+M by category, however our costs are based on past recent experience with large property acquisition and rehabilitation. Similar project costs range from \$15 to \$25 per acre per year for O&M and M&E. Initial protection measures including construction of perimeter fence will be completed over the first two years as funding is available and may cost up to \$200,000.00

A breakdown of O+M costs for the first year will be:

2002- Interim Noxious weed control \$30,000.00- Planning, and public involvement- \$50,000.00- Perimeter fence construction \$70,000.00

Potential funding partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service could offset some the initial and long-term O&M/ M&E costs. Subsequent to our submittal of the proposal the U.S. Forest Service has indicated that they will be spending an expected \$400,000 annually in the Desolation subbasin and that a large percentage of that money can be earmarked for recovery in this acquisition area

#### **M+E**

M+E will begin the first year with an estimated \$50,000 targeting surveys to collect baseline project level data. Planning efforts will be tiered to the John Day River Subbasin Summaries and subsequent Assessment and Plan to develop a project area M&E Plan. This will be integrated with a site specific recovery plan strategies that will treat the watershed in an integrated fashion with an emphasis on natural recovery and establishment of a largely self sustaining natural habitat. It is assumed that long term M&E expenditures will average \$50,000 per year for the first five years as monitoring of baseline conditions is phased into monitoring of treatment strategies.

It is important to note that while the property has been used primarily for commodity driven purposes, the current owners have taken relatively good care of the resources leaving a quality stronghold habitat with high potential for long term and cost effective restoration and management.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the ISRP concerns.

### APPENDIX A – Proposed Acquisition Area

