

STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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October 8, 2002

Rodney W. Sando
Executive Director
Columbia Basin Fish & Wildlife Authority
2501 SW First Ave / Suite 200
Portland, OR 97201

Dear Mr. Sando,

On behalf of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), I am requesting \$2.2 million in Unallocated Placeholder Funds to fund the riparian portion of project 27025, "Acquire South Fork Asotin Creek Property." This project falls within **Category 1¹** criteria as described in the draft Guide to Within-year Requests for New Projects (CBFWA, September 2002) which states, *"Because the proposal has been reviewed and recommended by the CBFWA and NWPPC, project sponsors are not required to complete additional request forms; however, sponsors are required to submit an official letter of request. The CBFWA will proceed to recommend such requests if there are sufficient funds, that have been earmarked for new projects, in the Unallocated Placeholder."*

This project received 'high priority' status by CBFWA and a "fundable" rating by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) during the recent rolling review process for the Blue Mountain Province.

Importantly, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has agreed to fund the riparian portion stating in part, *"that the potential acquisition of riparian habitat along the mainstem of George Creek and So. Fk. Asotin Creek would meet the intent of the NOAA Fisheries BiOp RPA 150, to protect currently productive habitat on private lands which is at risk of being degraded.....Both creeks contain ESA listed Snake River summer steelhead, the project site is entirely on private lands, m&e has shown this to be productive spawning and rearing habitat, because the property is for sale, there is a high risk that there would be a change in management that would degrade the current habitat condition, and project m&e can show continued spawning and rearing use that contributes to the survival of summer steelhead in the Asotin Creek watershed (Mark Shaw pers com., BPA, Sept. 2002).*

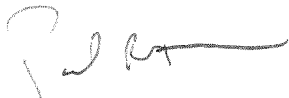
¹ Category 1: A project that was previously recommended for funding by both CBFWA and the NWPPC, but was not funded by BPA.

The Asotin Creek Watershed (the headwaters of which exist on the property to be acquired) is designated a "Wild Steelhead Reserve", and is the only area designated as such in Washington State. The purchase of the property would provide a key conservation linkage between the higher elevation National Forest lands and the lower elevation State lands in the area.

The RMEF and WDFW entered into formal negotiations for purchase of this 8,500 acre ranch property in June 2001. The RMEF has agreed to provide substantial cost-share for purchase of the uplands associated with this project. The uplands provide support for a large elk herd and are important lands for the recovery of listed Sharp-tailed grouse. The landowner has been growing impatient during the last 15 months as the process associated with this purchase drags on.

In closing, I strongly urge CBFWA to support the use of Unallocated Placeholder funds for Project 27025; this is an important fish and wildlife acquisition with significant long-term ecological benefits. I can be contacted at (509) 456-2823 or ashlepra@dfw.wa.gov if additional information is needed. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Paul R. Ashley
Fish and Wildlife Bio IV
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife