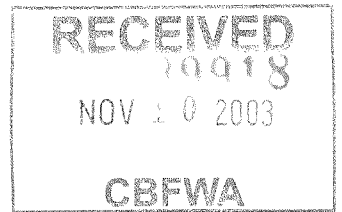


WATER /IRRIGATION DIVISIONS
2301 FRUITVALE BLVD.
Yakima, Washington 98902



November 7, 2003

Our Ref.: 023-1097-100

Northwest Power and Conservation Commission
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

ATTENTION: Doug Marker, NPCC Fish and Wildlife Division Director

RE: YAKIMA HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT REQUEST FOR SCOPE AND BUDGET AMENDMENT

Dear Mr. Marker;

The City of Yakima would like to take this opportunity to thank the Northwest Power and Conservation Council for its approval and funding recommendations to Bonneville Power Administration regarding the Yakima Habitat Improvement Project (HIP) (BPA #2002-038-00) (Northwest Power Planning Council letter to BPA dated May 12, 2003).

To date, this project has been highly successful in developing the *Yakima Habitat Improvement Project Master Plan* (April 23, 2003). In a letter dated May 12, 2003, the Northwest Power Planning Council (NWPPC) agreed that the plan was "thorough and complete" as well as "user-friendly", and that it met the conditions previously placed on the project. We also continue to be highly successful in maintaining Technical Work Group (TWG) coordination and support for the project. Our TWG currently consists of over 30 members of federal, tribal, state, agricultural, and conservation organizations in the Yakima area. These members are enthusiastic about the project and committed to making it a success. Our quarterly TWG meetings are well attended, and two entities that have attended regularly (USFWS and BOR) also provided letters of support to you for the Master Plan.

The Yakima Urban Area is a quickly developing population center, yet contains contiguous corridors of good quality habitat. The primary goal of the Yakima HIP program is to acquire lands for restoration and protection, improvements to water quality, reconnection of floodplain habitat, and protection of ESA-listed fish habitat within the urban environment. As part of our planning efforts to achieve this primary goal, the Master Plan included a scientifically rigorous GIS-based model to identify 33 top quality aquatic habitat parcels from 40,000 parcels within the Yakima Urban Area. Due to the rapid transitioning nature of this landscape it is important to act quickly to protect parcels with high quality habitat before they are developed.

TWG members spent many hours refining the high scoring parcels into four priority parcel groups. Group D contains four contiguous, high quality habitat parcels totaling 160 acres and portions of both Ahtanum and Bachelor creeks. At present, all of the parcels in Group D are for sale. Additionally, two other high-ranked parcels on Ahtanum Creek were recently included in a sub-division application for 106 residential units. Willing landowners and development pressure provide the perfect opportunity to achieve the goals of this project.

The City of Yakima considers it our duty, as project sponsor, to inform you that the Yakima HIP program is currently facing a critical nexus point and is in danger of failing to achieve its goals. Due to our current funding level of \$349,000, the project is unable to acquire these priority habitat parcels and realize its goals. In our provincial review proposal, we requested \$3.2 million in FY03 and \$4.4 million in FY04. While we recognize the current funding situation precludes us from receiving the full amount, we had hoped to obtain a reasonable amount to secure these high priority parcels. The opportunity to protect these high quality parcels will be lost if we cannot act now.

We are currently identifying partners for long-term management and restoration of these parcels. Discussions have been held with the Nature Conservancy, Yakima City and County Parks and Planning staff, the City of Union Gap, Bureau of Reclamation, Yakima Greenway Foundation, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, elected officials and others. There are many willing partners who are already aware of this project through the TWG and willing to work on future management issues. However, the lack of funds for initial purchases has raised concerns as to the validity of the entire program.

The Yakima HIP program can no longer afford to miss critical land acquisition opportunities and proceed "as effectively as it is capable" (NWPPC: April 30, 2003), while awaiting resolution of the funding restrictions. Priority habitat parcels that are lost to development will jeopardize the full realization of the Yakima HIP project goals. Numerous successful partnerships and involvement of dozens of organizations will be wasted. The failure of this highly visible, cooperative project will send a negative message throughout the entire region.

We have spoken with the landowner who is selling the four parcels in priority Group D. We have discussed a negotiable price of \$1.5 million. Please help us to make this project a complete success. The NWPPC letter (5/12/2003) states "additional funds, if needed, should be sought through future sponsor requests in subsequent Council project funding processes". Thus, we hereby formally request an additional \$1.5 million dollars in funding to allow the City to protect these high quality parcels from development. We further request the support of CBFWA and the Council to obtain the necessary funding to move the Program forward in a timely manner.

If purchase funding can not be realized immediately, are there other options available that will allow us to secure an option on this property to avoid losing it? We are sincerely seeking any guidance or assistance you can provide.

Please feel free to call Dueane Calvin at (509) 307-8611 with any questions about this highly important matter.

Sincerely,



Dueane Calvin, Calvin Consulting
For the City of Yakima

cc: Tom Iverson, CBFWA Fish and Wildlife Program Coordinator
Mark Fritch, NPCC
Stacy Horton, NPCC
Terry Larson, BPA
Scott Hampton, BPA
Jessica Wilcox, BPA