

DRAFT for Members Review & Approval Members Teleconference August 6, 2008

August XX, 2008

Mr. Stephen J. Wright, Administrator
Bonneville Power Administration
905 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97208-3621

Mr. Bill Booth, Chairman
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

Dear Messrs. Wright and Booth:

The fish and wildlife agencies and Tribes of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA) would like to request consultation on the development of comprehensive work plans to implement the Fish and Wildlife Program, Biological Opinions, and Columbia Basin Fish Accords for FY09-17. The Members of CBFWA appreciate the spirit of collaboration and cooperation apparent in the recent Columbia Basin Fish Accords. In that context, and as agreed in the recent MOA with the UCUT Tribes, we would like to meet as a group to discuss a process for establishing work plans and budgets to implement the Fish and Wildlife Program, including the Biological Opinions, over the next ten years, especially as it pertains to FY09-11.

We are currently reviewing the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) FY08-09 budget, the Biological Opinions, the Columbia Basin Fish Accords, CBFWA's critical and essential FY07-09 projects, the fish and wildlife agencies and Tribes individual and collective Fish and Wildlife Program amendment recommendations and individual comments submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, and comparing these planning efforts with BPA's proposed fish and wildlife costs for FY09 and FY10-11. Although we have not completed our review of the funding needed to implement projects and commitments identified in the documents listed above, we are encouraged by the initial funding levels that BPA has identified for FY2009-11. A concern is that we do not fully understand the process that will be used to determine the funding priorities to implement the proposed budgets and without that review and alignment, critical mitigation needs and commitments may not be addressed. The fish and wildlife agencies and Tribes have specific authorities and expertise that can assist in establishing priorities that provide the maximum benefit to the fish and wildlife resources in the Columbia Basin. To that end, it is essential that the Bonneville Power Administration, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, and the fish and wildlife agencies and Tribes meet to collaboratively develop a multi-year work plan.

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Additionally, we feel consultation on a collaborative work plan could resolve what appears to be a disagreement between BPA and the fish and wildlife agencies and Tribes as it pertains to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (Council) Fish and Wildlife Program amendment process. We reviewed the comments that BPA submitted to the Council on June 18, 2008 (see attached) in response to CBFWA recommendations to amend the Fish and Wildlife Program and there appears to be a striking gap in views of mitigation obligations and responsibilities for the construction and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System. A candid discussion of this issue would be helpful for all of us.

We would like to reiterate that it appears these two issues could be compatible, and a meeting between us could serve to focus planning assumptions and would help us understand the path forward. We request that you coordinate with CBFWA staff to set up a meeting date with our Members in the near future to discuss the strategies for aligning these processes and working collaboratively with the fish and wildlife managers for future decision making.

Sincerely,

Larry Peterman, Chairman
Columbia Basin Fish & Wildlife Authority

Attachments:

1. 6/18/08 BPA's Comments on Recommendations for Amending the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program
2. 6/10/2008 Appendix to Enclosure 1: Supporting BPA's April 4, 2008 Recommendations for Proposed Program Amendments
3. 6/16/08 Draft Program RM&E Language Expanding on BPA's Amendment Recommendations

cc: CBFWA Members
Council Members
Greg Delwiche and Bill Maslen, BPA