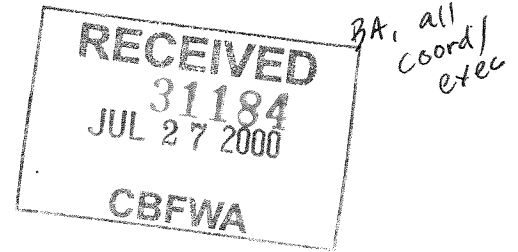




Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621



ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

July 25, 2000

In reply refer to: KEW-4

Mr. James Esget, Manager
Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project
Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 1749
Yakima, WA 98967-1749

Dear Mr. Esget:

You recently inquired with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) staff about the availability of BPA funding as part of a cost-share with the Bureau of Reclamation and the State of Washington Department of Ecology for the purchase of the water rights associated with the Wapatox hydroelectric project located on the Natches River. As you know, BPA makes funding decisions of this kind based on the project approval process under the Northwest Power Planning Council's (Council) Fish and Wildlife Program. BPA is already working with the Council to fund this project under the immediate action criteria that both the Federal Caucus and the Council are developing. This project is a great a candidate for early action consideration because it will immediately provide for more instream flows this summer for listed steelhead, as well as for non-listed spring Chinook in the Yakima River Basin. However, there are several steps in the project approval process that need to occur prior to Bonneville funding this proposed project.

Once the Federal Caucus and the Council finalize the immediate action criteria, BPA will look to the Council for review and approval of the projects that fit the criteria. According to Council staff, final recommendations for such projects are expected to occur early this fall. While there are never any "guarantees" about the status of Council action on proposed new projects, even one that qualifies as an immediate action project, I am hopeful that in several months BPA will receive a Council recommendation to proceed with the Wapatox project. Once the Council approves the project (and the associated budget) for BPA implementation as part of the Fish and Wildlife Program, BPA will proceed to fund the project under the Council's Program.

I hope this explanation helps you understand the review and approval process BPA expects for the Wapatox project. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at 503-230-4748 or David Byrnes at 503-230-3171.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Austin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert J. Austin,
Deputy Manager, Fish and Wildlife

cc:

Bob Lohn, Northwest Power Planning Council

Lynn Hatcher, Yakama Nation

John Easterbrooks, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Yakima Regional Office)

Brian Allee, Columbia Basin Fish & Wildlife Authority