October 4, 2006

TO: Mark Walker
Director of Public Affairs
Northwest Power & Conservation Council
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or email comments@nwcouncil.org

Dear NPCC Members,

As a property owner within the Lapwai Creek watershed, resident of the City of Culdesac, and an employee of the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District, I would like to comment on the 2007 BPA project draft Council recommendation list. It has been brought to my attention that two projects within the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District (Lapwai Creek 2002-070-00 and Big Canyon Creek 1999-015-00) are not included on the Council's draft recommendation list.

My family and I have recently relocated to the City of Culdesac so I would be closer to my job at the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District. I have more than 10 years of experience in the field of Natural Resources and 6 of those years in Fisheries at the state government level. In the short time I have been employed at the Conservation District I have seen more projects implemented that directly improve watersheds than all of my time with other agencies. The projects within the Lapwai and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds that we design and implement are rewarding and make me feel like something I am doing will make a difference.

I am a native of Idaho but not this area. I hear from many of the "old-timers" in the area of the number of steelhead that used to come up the creeks each spring in this area. They speak of floods in more recent times that never used to happen when there were more wetlands less roads. One landowner told me there used to be lush grass on all the open hillsides instead of the monoculture of Yellowstar thistle that chokes out any possible wildlife forage. Also of the bountiful wildlife that used to be in the area before clean farming eliminated hedgerows that provided cover for numerous species. I only know this area as it is now. To think that someday it could be restored to the days of old that my new elderly friends tell me of brings me hope.

It is clear to me that the locals have noticed changes and want to make wise conservation decisions. The Conservation district can help private landowners accomplish their management goals. In order to realize the restoration possibilities at the watershed-wide level, private landowners need to be educated as to the Best Management Practices on their land for their particular land use. The funds that BPA provides, allows the Conservation District to work directly with private landowners to restore fish habitat and water resources that they would otherwise not undertake by themselves. The relationship that the Conservation District has with landowners is that of respect and cooperation. It takes a lot of work to build that kind of trust.

I view the Conservation District as a very beneficial vehicle for environmental improvement, community development, economic growth, and conservation education in this area. There is no other agency offering the services that the Conservation District.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. I hope you make a recommendation that will allow continued conservation measures on private land in the Lapwai and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Fox 10 / 04 / 06

Culdesac, ID 83524