
NEZ PERCE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
PO BOX 131
CULDESAC, IDAHO 83524
208-843-2931 PHONE AND FAX



TO: MARK WALKER
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
NORTHWEST POWER & CONSERVATION COUNCIL
851 SW 6TH AVENUE, SUITE 1100
PORTLAND, OREGON 97204-1348

FROM: NEZ PERCE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT – JOHN HERMANN, CHAIR

SUBJECT: CONTINUED FUNDING FOR LAPWAI AND BIG CANYON CREEK BONNEVILLE POWER PROJECTS

DATE: 10/4/06

Dear Council Members:

The Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District (District) requests the addition of the Lapwai Creek (project # 2002-070-00) and Big Canyon Creek (project # 1999-015-00) to the Council's final recommendation list. We strongly feel our projects justify funding based on the following:

- Work in Lapwai and Big Canyon Creeks is supportable due to the high potential for anadromous fish production.
- The District is the biggest bang for BPA's buck for on-the-ground work in the Clearwater subbasin.
- Treatments used by the District are proven to restore fish habitat.
- Strong landowner support and cooperation allows for the only habitat restoration done on private land within the Nez Perce Tribe Reservation.
- Project funds used for on the ground restoration activities are paid directly to local contractors, businesses and landowners, strengthening the community.

These projects are on-going, have established a strong landowner commitment to improving habitat, and have completed a tremendous amount of habitat implementation within the past three years. Since 2003, the District has spent \$1.4 million to improve anadromous fish habitat within the watersheds. Projects in the Lapwai Creek watershed totaled \$948,215 (126 projects) for the 3 years while Big Canyon Creek watershed totaled \$528,040 (90 Projects). BPA's investment in the work completed to date, future planned projects, and projects partially in the implementation phase will be lost without continued funding on some level. Much of the benefits achieved by these projects will also be lost. Within Big Canyon Creek 27 projects are planned, designed and ready for implementation for 2007. Within Lapwai Creek 45 projects are planned, designed and ready for implementation in 2007-2008.

The District's use of BPA funds is unique in that it has a comparatively low indirect administration cost of 10%. Approximately 65% of each dollar from the Lapwai Creek project and 59% of each dollar from the Big Canyon Creek project goes to on-the-ground work in the form of habitat improvements. Over the past three years the District has obtained an additional \$3.45 for each dollar BPA has invested. The \$3.45 is in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, professional services and labor from landowners, county, state, tribal and federal sources. We are estimating similar results for the 2007 to 2009 period. Sources of cost-share and match include USDA, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Nez Perce Tribe, Trout Unlimited, Nez Perce County, Lewis County, private landowners, City of Winchester, City of Peck, City of Culdesac, McGregor Company, and the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission.

In addition, the District has creatively implemented low-cost alternatives for fish habitat restoration. For example, our bio-engineering costs for tree revetment bank protection average \$15 per linear foot. This is compared to the local USDA-NRCS cost share list price of \$35 per linear foot. We achieve this reduction from the donation of local materials from forestry projects, transportation of materials by local landowners (at no cost), and use of Idaho Department of Corrections labor for installation. We

have lowered costs of off-site watering project installation through the use of recycled heavy equipment tires for troughs. We also grow many of the wetland and sod bio-logs that are installed on our projects. This results in more on-the-ground projects for less money! We implement innovative and creative solutions to habitat restoration problems. For example, we have used BPA funds to grow wetland sod and biologists for use in streambank and wetland restoration. This technique is new to the area and has been very successful. We coordinated with NOAA, Idaho Fish and Game and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop low cost stream crossing alternatives for use in agricultural applications. We have installed one of the 3 alternatives developed and plan to install the other two in 2007. Bottom line, we are cost effective and innovative when using these funds!

We encourage private landowners to develop long-term conservation plans. The District inventories conditions on sections of streams never before surveyed due to private ownership. Also the District serves as a vehicle for environmental improvement, community development, economic growth, and conservation education to area residents. Additionally, we are the only local based entity working on private lands within the Nez Perce Tribe Reservation. These are all reasons why it is advantageous for the continuation of funding.

As a grass-roots organization, the District has support from local private landowners unparalleled by any state, tribal, or federal agency in the area. This landowner support has come from years of cooperation and willingness to work with landowners' individual conservation needs as a non-regulatory entity. We have shown local community members that we are genuinely concerned with the restoration of the watersheds and ecological issues within the District's boundaries and the Clearwater subbasin.

A major concern of the District is the ultimate closing of the project office in Culdesac without continued BPA funding of these two projects. The District staff has been diligent in applying for additional funding and has not been able to receive the funds for proposed projects. The loss of infrastructure and staff already in place will result in the loss of the productive momentum that will be difficult if not impossible to restore. The District does not have a public funding base and relies on contracts and grants to conduct its work. Landowners will experience a decreased opportunity to meet water quality and other regulatory issues. The withdrawal of these projects will result in a loss to our local watershed effort, waste the funds invested by BPA to date, and lose landowner confidence which was difficult to generate.

Lastly, the District would like to state that we are very confident that the work we are doing for the watersheds is having a positive impact on the focal species and water quality as a whole. The benefits derived from project implementation are comparable to any other conservation project statewide. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss our projects.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

John Hermann
Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District
PO Box 131
Culdesac, Idaho 83524