



Okanagan Nation Alliance
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Mark Walker
Manager of Public Affairs
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
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Dear Mr. Walker

Re: Comments on the Draft Northwest Power and Conservation Council Funding Recommendations to the Bonneville Power Administration for 2007 - 2009

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft Northwest Power and Conservation Council funding recommendations to the Bonneville Power Administration.

As you may be aware, the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) is a tribal Government in British Columbia and represents the collective rights and interests of our 7-member bands (see attached map). The Okanagan Nation has never ceded its title or rights to lands or resources within our Traditional Territory to any government in Canada, British Columbia, the United States or Washington State.

The Okanagan Nation was not consulted during the construction of any of the hydroelectric facilities in the Columbia Basin. Because of these developments, our Nation and the fisheries resources that we have rights and access to, have suffered significant declines and/or extirpation of salmon and steelhead species over the last several decades. The Okanagan Nation has not received compensation for the subsequent impacts that dam construction and operations have had to our sovereign Nation.

The Okanagan Basin is a transboundary watershed and is subject to a complex network of First Nation (tribes), international, federal, provincial and state legislation, policies and/or management activities. The Okanagan Nation Alliance has established long-term collaborative working relationships with government agencies and tribes in Canada, the US, British Columbia and Washington State on efforts to rebuild the long overlooked Okanagan salmon populations and to protect and restore critical habitat. Because Okanagan Basin is an international watershed, we must work together to develop goals and objectives for the recovery and sustainability of critical fisheries resources.

The ONA has been working closely with the Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT), our tribal relations in Washington State, on fisheries initiatives for the past 9 years. The ONA and CCT are working together in the Okanagan Basin to improve communication, coordination among agencies and the allocation of financial resources to where it is most needed for salmon recovery.

Currently, there are several fisheries projects we are collaborating on, including the *Okanagan Basin Monitoring and Evaluation Project*, in our efforts to monitor, plan and recover salmon and steelhead populations in the Okanagan Basin.

We are extremely concerned that the NPCC is not supporting the recommendations of the Independent Scientific Review Panel to fund critical projects in the Okanagan Sub-Basin. A lack of funding to implement much needed salmon recovery efforts in the Okanagan Basin will be to the ultimate detriment of endangered or declined stocks that struggle for their survival. We remind the NPCC that there is a responsibility to protect, mitigate, and enhance *all* fish and wildlife species affected by the construction and operation of the federal hydroelectric facilities in the Columbia Basin.

Not only does the Okanagan River support ESA endangered spring chinook and steelhead, *it supports 1 of only 2 viable populations of sockeye remaining in the entire Columbia Basin.* The ONA has also completed independent assessments of current chinook and steelhead stock status in the Okanagan River in Canada, and may be pursuing a listing of these species under Canada's new Species at Risk Act (SARA), which is similar to the US Endangered Species Act (ESA). Preliminary habitat assessments conducted during the recent Okanagan Sub-Basin Plan EDT analysis indicate that there is tremendous potential in the upper Okanagan River Basin and its tributaries to restore historic salmon and steelhead habitat that could be pursued as a strategy to recover the current populations of sockeye, steelhead and chinook.

The following two projects will benefit anadromous salmon populations in the Okanagan Basin by extending the current migratory access and improving the quality of in-stream habitats for adult and juvenile salmon and steelhead:

200600100 – McIntyre Dam Feasibility Study

200728200 – Okanagan River Restoration Initiative Phase IV & V

These projects also already have the support of numerous Federal, Provincial and First Nations Governments and a variety of non-government organizations with interests in fish and wildlife protection and conservation. These habitat initiatives also compliment other salmon recovery projects on-going or proposed in the Okanagan Basin.

We trust that NPCC will give serious considerations to our comments, and will revise its recommendations to the Bonneville Power Administration for project funding to include projects in the international Okanagan Basin which will benefit the salmon and steelhead species that it supports.

Sincerely,
OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE



Deana Machin
Fisheries Program Manger

