



Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board

c/o Okanogan County Natural Resources
123 5th Ave N, Suite 110
Okanogan, WA 98840

September 29, 2006

Mr. Mark Walker, Director of Public Affairs
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 S. W. Sixth Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mr. Walker,

The Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board (Board) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (Council) draft fish and wildlife funding recommendations to the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) for Fiscal Years 2007 through 2009. The Board appreciates the difficulty faced by the Council in allocating limited resources throughout the Columbia Basin. However, the Board sincerely believes that the proposed and historical recommendations drastically under-fund mitigation projects in the Columbia Cascade Province, given both the impacts of the hydro-power system on this province and the status of threatened and endangered salmonid species within our region. The Board has serious concerns that this funding pattern could move the agencies closer to jeopardy.

In May of 2006, the Board approved a list of 42 projects suitable for funding by the BPA. The Board's list of approved projects was developed in cooperation between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Yakama Nation, and the Colville Confederated Tribes. The agencies reviewed the proposed projects using the criteria developed by the Independent Scientific Review Panel.

Despite the efforts of the Board and our partners in this region, the majority of projects that we endorsed are not being recommended for funding by the Council or any other source. This lack of financial support does not reflect the ecological importance of the Columbia Cascade Province, and leaves our regional salmon recovery agencies and partners largely unable to make the necessary progress towards salmon recovery and implement measures identified in the subbasin plans or watershed plans.

Currently, spring Chinook are listed as endangered, and bull trout and steelhead are listed as threatened. The listed species within the Ecologically Significant Unit (ESU) of the Columbia Cascade Province are subject to the highest risk of extinction as identified by the Interior Columbia Technical Review Team (ICTRT). The Board sincerely hopes that the Council will consider this biological sensitivity when making its funding recommendations for 2007 through 2009. Even though the risk of extinction is high, the Board is committed to restoring sustainable populations of salmon and steelhead in this province.

The Board notes that there have been changes to the status of two projects that are currently being recommended by the Council for BPA funding. The cost of the Nason Creek Oxbow Connection project, due to a design change, has been reduced from \$1.23 million to \$650,000, thus reducing the request to BPA by \$580,000. Additionally, the Wenatchee Passage Program, with a cost of \$250,000, will likely be funded through other sources, and the project sponsor, Chelan County, requests that this project not be considered in the Council's recommendation. The combined change of these projects is \$830,000, and the Board requests that this money remain in the Columbia Cascade Province and be recommended for other projects in the province. At this time, the Board also requests that the Council consider the Columbia Cascade Province in the first year of your rolling review in the Columbia Basin.

Again, we would like to emphasize that we understand the difficulty you face in making fiscal decisions with scarce resources in the Columbia Basin. We only ask that you keep in mind the difficulty we face in fostering salmon recovery in this region. As the new strength of cooperation and trust are forged through communication and understanding, the Board hopes it can rely upon a genuine commitment from the Council to help sponsor the return of sustainable populations of salmon in our region.

With Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William T. Towey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "With Best Regards," text.

William T. Towey, Chair
Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board

cc: Dr. Tom Karier, Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Frank L. (Larry) Cassidy, Jr. Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Greg Delwiche, Bonneville Power Administration