

From: Tim and Tracie Unterwegner
Sent: Monday, October 02, 2006 9:42 PM
To: Baugh, Zenobia
Subject: FY07-09

October 2, 2006

Mark Walker
Director of Public Affairs
Northwest Power & Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, Oregon 97204-1348

Dear Mr. Walker,

I have lived in the John Day River basin off and on since 1976, have worked in natural resource management for 30 years and within the basin for 19 years and am very familiar with the value of a healthy riparian area toward fish habitat. I am not in the habit of writing letters to public officials promoting one resource over the other, but I feel strongly enough about this particular issue that I am compelled to write.

I recently learned that the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (Council) has recommended to not fund an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife fish habitat program (Project No. 198402100) that has been extremely effective at restoring degraded riparian areas within the John Day River basin for the last 22 years. Although all the details for the recommendation are not clear, one of the reasons cited is that the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) thought there was not adequate evaluation of the techniques or effectiveness of the program.

It does not take an extensive evaluation and effectiveness monitoring project to demonstrate how dramatic the changes in riparian vegetation have been since the project first began in 1984. When I first began working as a seasonal employee in the John Day River basin in 1976, riparian vegetation along the mainstem John Day River above the town of John Day was intermittent at best. Since project implementation began, the project has been responsible for constructing fence along more than 60% of the river between the town of John Day and the Malheur National Forest boundary several miles above the town of Prairie City. Now there is almost a continuous ribbon of cottonwood, alder and/or willows along the entire length of the river. The project has constructed and maintained over 150 miles of riparian fence since 1984. Not only has the project been successful in demonstrating to landowners and others the benefits of a healthy riparian area, it has provided the impetus to landowners to enroll in other conservation practices that are also beneficial to fish resources. Other agencies who have benefited from these initial contacts made by the ODFW Habitat Biologists include; Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Grant Soil and Water Conservation District, Wheeler County SWCD, Gilliam County SWCD, North

Fork John Day Watershed Council, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Farm Services Agency.

If this project is not funded, the investments already made in a more fully functioning riparian area will be at risk because fence maintenance will be left up to the landowner. Recovery of the ESA listed John Day River steelhead population will also be compromised because the rate at which habitat is improving throughout the sub-basin will be reduced.

I strongly urge the Council to reconsider their recommendation to not fund this project and to instead, fund it at the requested FY 07-09 levels.

Thank you for considering my input.

Sincerely,
Tim Unterwegner
John Day, Oregon