



YAKIMA BASIN
FISH AND WILDLIFE
RECOVERY BOARD

October 6th, 2006

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

Dear Mr. Walker,

The Yakima Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board would like to comment on the draft fish and wildlife project funding recommendations. The recommendation for the Yakima Basin represents a significant decrease from past allocations to the Basin, even as both the need for fish & wildlife enhancement work and our capacity to get projects done effectively and efficiently has increased. We encourage both the Council and the BPA to strive to restore full funding to the Yakima Basin. The Yakima Basin has a productive potential for a wide range of species—fall and spring chinook, coho, steelhead, sockeye, bull trout and others—that is unmatched in the region. The Yakima Basin is also an integral part of any efforts to address the recovery needs of, and eventually de-list, Mid-Columbia Steelhead. Fully funding restoration work in this basin should be a key component of the Fish & Wildlife Program.

Several immediate and very doable steps will go a long way to meeting this goal. First, we encourage BPA to make full use of the capital budget, and ask the Council to emphasize to BPA that the recommended funding levels for Yakima Basin projects were for the expense budget. Priority projects with elements that qualify for capitalization should receive capital funding that is in addition to, and not in place of, the expense-budget recommendation made by the Council. This will ensure that key projects can be funded at their requested levels, which will allow them to build on their excellent track records for on-the-ground project implementation.

We also request that the Council call for BPA to utilize part of the \$10.5 million in carryover funds and the \$6.2 million in savings in the system-wide allocation to fund projects in the Yakima Basin that directly implement Fish & Wildlife Program priorities.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Council/BPA project review. As the Regional Recovery Board for the Yakima Basin, we appreciate the opportunities the Council has extended to us to participate in local project reviews. We look forward to working with the Council in the future to develop a robust review process that integrates with the Council's program and ensures that the knowledge and priorities of local partners become a key element in the project selection process.

Sincerely,


Alex Conley
Executive Director