

**Jenkins, Kris**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 08, 2005 7:01 AM  
**To:** Walker, Mark  
**Subject:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service testimony - The Fish Passage Center



Fish Passage  
Center Testimony....

Mark - Attached is a copy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service testimony regarding the Fish Passage Center. Thanks for the opportunity to provide our comments.

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(See attached file: Fish Passage Center Testimony.doc)

## **Fish Passage Center Testimony - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Madame Chair and Council members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the issue of the Fish Passage Center, its structure and function, and the implementation of the Congressional language.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service appreciates the Council's willingness to take public comment on this important issue. We recognize its importance to the continued management of the fishery resources in the Columbia Basin, and to the on-going efforts at Regional collaboration regarding future operations of the Federal hydropower system. Therefore, we encourage the Council and Bonneville to act quickly and to make a decision that will serve the long-term interests of the Region.

I would note that it appears that Congress has provided the Council with a role in implementing this language that is equal to that of Bonneville. The operative sentence indicates: "*The conferees call upon Bonneville Power Administration and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council to ensure that an orderly transfer of FPC functions occurs within 120 days of enactment of this legislation.*" Although I have no opinion on how Bonneville has decided to implement this language, it appears that Congress intended the Council to have a role comparable to that of Bonneville. As I read it, the decision on where the FPC functions reside in the future is a shared responsibility between the Council and Bonneville.

As you know, the primary purpose of the FPC is to provide technical assistance and information to fish and wildlife agencies and tribes, in particular, and the public in general, on juvenile and adult salmon and steelhead passage through the mainstem Columbia River. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service strongly supports the continuation of the functions of the FPC into the future.

Currently, the FPC provides technical information and analysis to the State, Tribal and Federal agencies who manage fishery resources on the Columbia River and are affected by hydropower operations, including the operation of the Federal Hydropower System.

Recommendations regarding anadromous fish passage and migration are developed by the Federal, State, and Tribal Salmon Managers. The FPC participates in the in-season management processes and the Salmon Manager's recommendations are based, in part, on FPC analysis and summary of current and historical fish passage data.

I will not go into all the functions of the FPC since they are numerous and varied. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes and appreciates all the functions of the FPC and the importance of the information to the scientific management of the fishery resources of the Columbia Basin. Indeed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cannot exercise its responsibilities successfully or with the best scientific information available without the information provided by the FPC. It is vital the information that is

currently being collected, analyzed, and distributed continue to be available to fishery managers and to the public.

As noted, the Congressional language requires a “seamless” continuity of FPC activities. We strongly agree with this requirement. To us, it appears that Congress realized that one of the most important aspects of the FPC is the efficiency and value of consolidating over 20 years of fish passage monitoring and analyses expertise in one integrated staff.

The three functions mentioned in the Congressional language (warehousing the smolt monitoring data, routine data collection and analysis, and coordination of the smolt monitoring program) were not patched together overnight. Rather, they have been carefully knitted together over the past 20 years into a coordinated effort at data collection, data analysis, QA/QC, information reporting, feedback loops, peer review, and continuous improvement. Three functions mentioned are closely intertwined and the success of each depends on the other two. We believe the fabric of the FPC is the strongest when these functions are maintained as an interconnected unit.

However, we also recognize the difficulty of achieving this high standard within 120 days. It appears there is some discussion of placing all three FPC functions under one administrative unit, rather than splitting them into separate functions that might go to two or three separate entities. We believe that keeping all three functions under one roof is a very good idea that would satisfy the Congressional requirement for a seamless transition. Therefore, we strongly encourage the Council and Bonneville to maintain all three functions under one administrative unit. We believe this would achieve the Congressional intent for continuity and expediency.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has no opinion, at this time, on which regional entity should administer these functions. However, we offer the following consideration: Since the FPC was established to provide Federal, State, and Tribal fish managers with technical information on fish survival, a successful transition would require fish managers continue to have *access, oversight, and accountability*. That is, the State, Tribal and Federal fish managers must continue to have direct access to the technical data and information, they must continue to have oversight of the FPC functions, and whatever replaces the FPC must continue to be accountable to the State, Tribal, and Federal fishery managers. This is NOT to say that others entities and interests cannot join the fish managers in these tasks. Indeed, it is expected the FPC data and information be accessible to everyone and that whatever replaces the FPC must be accountable to the Region, as a whole.

In summary, we encourage the Council to take an active role in this decision, we support continuing the FPC functions, we believe that maintaining all FPC functions under one entity would be consistent with the Congressional language, and we look forward to getting this issue behind us so we can continue the efforts at long-term collaboration within the Columbia Basin. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and we look forward to a decision by the Council and Bonneville in the near future.