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Sent: Wednesday, November 20, 2002 3:19 PM
To: Kerry Berg; jhines@nwppc.org
Subject: native fisheries impacts/Sierra Club

This note concerns the Council's mainstem proposed amendments/programs.

Dear Kerry Berg and John Hines:

We, too, appreciate the open dialogue on these and the many other important issues that we face together.

However, I believe since we're still in draft form here regarding the proposed mainstem amendments that it may be premature to assume that we disagree. After all, as of yet, it appears that no one on the Council has their own hands directly on this science that documents these negative impacts to native fisheries. Therefore, we thank you for your below offer and we look forward to the opportunity to review the science from your folks that y'all continue to refer to.

Furthermore, from where we currently sit, the science that we have reviewed from the USFWS (and state agencies) under consultation with the Corps, is very clear. Aside from burbot, increased flows seemingly benefit numerous resident species in both MT and ID, including bull trout, kokanee, white sturgeon, salmon, steelhead, and in some cases several species of trout and other resident species.

Yes, the ISAB and other federal agencies have said more research is needed. And yes I recall some anecdotal info. about certain resident fish being stranded in shallow water by flucuating flows associated with power peaking, but other than these and a couple of other fairly vague references, we can't find any science that supports MT and ID's "questions" and proposed spring and summer operational changes regarding flow related issues. In fact, MDFWP does mention some potential impacts associated with unnatural flows, but they certainly don't recommend eliminating spring and summer flow targets.

I also don't see any mention in this document that came out of the Corps' Seattle District that would make me feel any different about these flow issues--November 14, 2002: The draft environmental assessment on potential interim implementation of VARQ is available for comment under the Documents and Links section. UPPER COLUMBIA ALTERNATIVE FLOOD CONTROL AND FISH OPERATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) at:
http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/PublicMenu/Menu.cfm?sitename=VARQ&pagename=VARQ

As I mentioned at the hearing, given what science is on the table at this point, what is clear is that the Council, so far, is ignoring the science provided by the ISAB, other agencies, and by many state and tribal biologists regarding their stated support for the benefits that flow has for migrating fish. We thought that the Council is required to give deference to state and tribal biologists, not to mention to best available science.

At least in this instance, it's also clear to us that reducing flows is NOT helpful to resident fish; therefore, we are truly talking "boat ramp biology" because I'm sure the folks most upset by increased flows are the resident boaters and business owners on Lake Koocanusa. While there might

just be some legitimate impacts to certain resident fish and in certain places and while there may be significant concerns regarding boats and dock access, we feel those issues should be addressed with real solutions and discussions/proposals about eliminating flow simply don't give us that.

Regards, Chase

Chase C. Davis--Regional Rep.
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