

Council members

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Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

June 29, 2006

In reply refer to: KEW-4

20060906

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

RE: Council documents 2006-7 and 2006-8

Dear Mr. Walker:

This letter responds to your request for comments on a proposal for a Columbia Basin Data Center (CBDC). We strongly support the general goal of this proposal, but believe there are existing coordination forums and ongoing projects that are currently advancing these objectives from both a Columbia Basin and a Pacific Northwest regional perspective. Therefore, we believe that additional leadership, support, and regional cooperation of ongoing initiatives could meet our respective information and data management needs, rather than creating a new, and perhaps duplicative, entity.

The CBDC proposal would develop an online data portal, identify data gaps, oversee data quality, and propose data standards. We agree that these tasks are important to the region and that they require broad participation and support to be successful. While we do not see it as appropriate for Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to assume the data management responsibilities of the broader Pacific Northwest, we have and will continue to participate in and support the many regional forums that are addressing our Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) management needs as part of this broader initiative.

- **Internet Access** – A key element of the CBDC proposal is for a Data Center to develop and maintain an internet portal for existing regional data. We agree that it is important for the region to have one place where people can find data on the status of species in the Fish and Wildlife Program and in the broader region. Current advancements in distributed network capabilities, however, do not require a central data warehouse. Rather, we support development of a distributed information network to store, find and use fish, wildlife and water data, as is being undertaken by the Northwest Environmental Data Network (NED), and consistent with recommendations from Science Applications International Corporation in their report on development of a Columbia Basin Cooperative Information System. Further, BPA will work with the Council to ensure that data generated by BPA funded projects is shared appropriately.
- **Data Gaps** – A second element of the proposal is for the CBDC to conduct inventories of existing data, identify data gaps, and facilitate approaches that would resolve these gaps. Several forums are already producing data inventories and identifying data gaps. While these activities

may need to be expanded to help identify fish, wildlife, and water data needs at a regional level, BPA's support for these activities will need to remain grounded in addressing FCRPS effects.

- **Data Integrity** – A third element of the proposal is for the CBDC to oversee data quality and insure data integrity. Data quality issues are important; this issue could be addressed through the careful development of a data portal and data standards.
- **Data Standards** – The final element of the proposal is for the CBDC to propose protocols for data collection, reporting, and quality for adoption by the Council. BPA and the Council participate in and contribute to a number of entities that are working to develop data standards. For example, the Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP) is advancing on common standards for sampling designs and data collection in close cooperation with other entities (e.g., ISEMP and CSMEP). Once the region agrees upon data standards, BPA will work with the Council to make sure that the projects we fund are consistent with those standards.

I recognize that these on-going efforts do not currently form a single cohesive unit operating within a comprehensive and strategic data management plan. I agree that such a plan is desirable and that BPA will continue to participate in a regionally supported effort to advance and coordinate our data management initiatives. As a first step, it is important to make sure that ongoing initiatives have sufficient regional commitments and representation. In particular, I commit to furthering NED objectives by working with you to gain Federal Caucus member signatures on the NED memorandum of understanding. I ask that the Council work with the state Governor's to encourage each state's Fish and Wildlife Director to sign the NED MOU and become a participant.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the CBDC proposal. We agree with the proposal's goal and that more needs to be done to transform ongoing efforts under a comprehensive plan that will improve the collection, management and sharing of high quality environmental data and information. At this time, we encourage a directed effort through a united regional leadership to better focus ongoing initiatives rather than creating a new CBDC. We look forward to working with you and other regional interests to advance this important initiative.

Sincerely,



William C. Maslen
Director of Fish and Wildlife

cc:

Mr. Doug Marker, Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Mr. Tom Karier, Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Mr. Brian Lipscomb, Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority