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August 14, 2009

Mr. William C. Maslen
Manager, Fish and Wildlife Division
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208

Dear Mr. Maslen:

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the Council's decision on a Columbia River Fish Accord proposal. This recommendation was made by the Council at its meeting on August 12, 2009.

In addition, a purpose of this letter is to inform the project sponsor and other interested parties of the status of this Council action. The following is a summary of the action taken by the Council at the meeting in August.

Sturgeon Management, Project # 2008-455-00

In 2008-2009, Bonneville, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (the "Action Agencies") signed agreements with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation (CTWSRO), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN), and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC). The agreement with these Tribes and CRITFC is referred to as the Three Treaty Tribes MOA. The Action Agencies also signed agreements with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT), the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (SBT), and the states of Idaho, Montana and Washington. These agreements, the Columbia Basin Fish Accords, fund actions that will deliver specific, scientifically-sound results for the region's fish and wildlife.

As set forth in the guidance document outlining the review process for the Accords, the Council recognizes Bonneville's commitment to Accord projects. The Accords do not, however, alter the Council's responsibilities with respect to independent science review or the Council's role following such review. As with all projects in the Fish and Wildlife Program, Accord projects are subject to review by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) and the Council provides funding recommendations based on full consideration of the ISRP's report and the Council's Program.

On May 19, 2009, the Council received from Bonneville a Columbia Basin Fish Accords proposal from the Yakama Nation (YN) for #2008-455-00, *Sturgeon Management*.¹

The proposal was submitted to the ISRP for review, and on June 17, 2009 the ISRP provided a review (ISRP document 2009-22). The ISRP found that the proposal “Meets Scientific Review Criteria in Part, (Qualified).” No public comment was received on the ISRP review.

The goal of this project is to facilitate restoration of population abundance and fishery benefits for white sturgeon in mid-Columbia River reservoirs between Bonneville and Priest Rapids dams. Following are the five objectives associated with the proposed project.

- Objective 1 *Assist in the development of a recovery strategy, research and monitoring design, and hatchery Master Plan for depleted sturgeon populations in FCRPS portions of the mid-Columbia and lower Snake rivers.*
- Objective 2 *Continue to develop critical expertise and refine effective sturgeon culture methodology for spawning and rearing of white sturgeon using tribal staff, facilities and resources, and captive broodstock.*
- Objective 3 *Identify facility and staff requirements and costs of hatchery alternatives for use in research/monitoring and hatchery master planning considerations.*
- Objective 4 *Develop a detailed implementation plan for production and rearing of juvenile sturgeon as appropriate for use in experimental research and hatchery feasibility evaluations (as identified in #1 above).*
- Objective 5 *Assist in the development and implementation of effective experimental research/monitoring, and hatchery feasibility evaluations (as identified in #1 above).*

The ISRP found that Objective 1 met scientific review criteria for the planning associated with addressing the needs of the sturgeon populations in the mid-Columbia River reservoirs. The remaining four objectives (i.e., 2 - 5) were found not to meet science review criteria at this time due to their dependence on the outcome of the planning effort addressed in objective 1.

The ISRP also wanted to ensure the linkage of this proposal to Project #2007-155-00, *Develop a Master Plan for a Rearing Facility to Enhance Selected Populations of White Sturgeon in the Columbia River Basin*.² The ISRP members stated that many of their comments regarding the

¹ The proposal is listed in the May 2008 agreement in Attachment B.5; Hatchery Planning, O&M. New.

² This project that was proposed and submitted by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), and was favorably reviewed by the ISRP (ISRP document 2009-10) and recommended by the Council on April 14, 2009. The Council recommended support for the project, as designed, to develop a collaborative and comprehensive strategic plan for sturgeon conservation, restoration, and management in the mid-Columbia and lower Snake River reservoirs (i.e., Objective 1). As designed the project would transition, if necessary, to objectives including the step review process to implement hatchery-related actions if identified in the comprehensive strategic plan (i.e., Objectives 2 and 3).

review of Project 2007-155-00 also applies to this proposal. The relationship between the two projects is evident by their common goals and similar objectives.

The ISRP review also provided additional comments to the Yakama Nation intended to benefit the anticipated comprehensive sturgeon strategic plan.

Council staff understands the ISRP logic regarding the need for participation in a comprehensive strategy (Objective 1) and master planning process (Objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5) for this proposal. Similarly, the ISRP and Council recommended that the hatchery-related objectives (Objectives 2 and 3) of the CRITFC project (i.e., #2007-155-00) depend on the outcome of the strategic-planning effort defined in Objective 1 (i.e., *facilitate a workshop process involving co-managers, significant stakeholders, and technical experts in order to develop a consensus for goals and strategies for restoration of depleted sturgeon populations in mainstem reservoirs*).

A qualification to this understanding is that Council and Yakama Nation staffs also support the activities associated with Objective 2 (i.e., *develop critical expertise and refine effective sturgeon culture methodology for spawning and rearing of white sturgeon*). Proposed activities associated with this objective are at an experimental level, and since the Yakama Nation currently has a maturing captive sturgeon population that has been held from past projects (#96-032-01, *Begin Implementation of Year 1 of the K-Pool Master Plan [Supp#15]*) and project activities (e.g., #1986-050-00, *Evaluate Sturgeon Populations in the Lower Columbia River*) that are no longer funded, it seems reasonable that these activities proceed with the existing infrastructure and experimental approach. These activities will not expand to what is currently available at the site until activities addressed under Objective 1 are reviewed and approved.

Based on the ISRP review and the understanding that future activities (Objectives 3, 4, and 5) depend on a future review (i.e., Master Plan), the Council supports the implementation of Objectives 1 and 2 of this proposal. A condition of this recommendation is that additional detail and confirmation will be provided when the Master Plan is submitted associating this proposal with the hatchery-related actions of Project #2007-155-00, if identified in the comprehensive strategic plan.

Sincerely,

Tony Grover
Director, Fish and Wildlife Division

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