



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115

February 25, 2010

Erik Merrill
Coordinator, Independent Scientific Advisory Board
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, Oregon 97204

Dear Mr. Merrill:

I am writing to request the Independent Scientific Advisory Board's (ISAB) assistance with a question related to a "low flow" transportation proposal for the spring 2010 juvenile outmigration. Our specific question is found in the attached document entitled "NOAA's 'Low Flow' Transport Operations Proposal."

For 2010, it appears we may be facing a very low water year in the Columbia Basin. The latest river forecasts estimate flow at The Dalles Dam to be only 71 percent of the 30-year average. The current flow forecast for the Snake River is approximately 65 kcfs. We believe new information in a 2010 Northwest Fisheries Science Center Report demonstrates there is significant benefit to maximizing the transport of Snake River juvenile steelhead and spring/summer Chinook under low flow conditions in the month of May. Information from 2007 (the most recent low flow year) is generally consistent with transport data used to structure transport operations under the 2008 FRCRPS Biological Opinion.

I understand this request for review comes with very short notice, but the ISAB's input would be very helpful and appreciated in light of the current water situation. An expedited review completed by early April 2010 would allow us to consider the ISAB findings in making final operational decisions for this spring.

We have briefed regional interests, including the Regional Implementation Oversight Group, the Fish Passage Advisory Committee and others on the new information and begun the discussion about the best strategy to protect wild salmon and steelhead under these challenging conditions. However, because of the urgency of the issue and constraints with the ISAB work schedule we were unable to inform interested parties of our intention to request an ISAB review.



We encourage the ISAB to hear from other scientists who may have a different interpretation of the data and hope that both NOAA and others will be asked to present their views. If there is anything we can do to help facilitate the review, please let us know.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Bruce Suzumoto (503-230-5417).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry A. Thom", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Barry A. Thom
Acting Regional Administrator

Attachment