



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
525 NE Oregon Street
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-2737

October 10, 2003

Chairman Gary Aitken
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
P.O. Box 1269
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805

Dear Chairman Aitken,

We are seeking your comments on the 2003 Check-in Report for the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bonneville Power Administration (Action Agencies) recently posted on the web at www.salmonrecovery.gov. This is the first of three detailed comprehensive check-in reports to be developed under the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion (BiOp) by the Action Agencies to assess in detail the Reasonable Prudent Alternative's (RPA) implementation and effectiveness.

A detailed overview of the mid-point evaluation process is found in Section 9.5 of the BiOp. As part of the mid-point evaluation process, NOAA Fisheries will issue a report in each of the check-in years that documents whether the RPA is on track or is failing to meet expectations. NOAA Fisheries' evaluation during the 2003 check-in will focus primarily on the implementation of the RPA measures and, in particular, on the early implementation of hydro, offsite mitigation, and research, monitoring, and evaluation measures that are essential to avoid jeopardy and adverse modification of critical habitat.

The scope of the 2003 evaluation is identified in Section 9.5.2.3 of the BiOp. We would like your written comments on the 2003 Check-in Report by November 14, 2003, so that we can take them into consideration during our evaluation. NOAA Fisheries is scheduled to complete its evaluation by December 2003 at which time the evaluation report will be made public. If you have any questions about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the Federal Caucus coordinator Lisa Croft (Lisa.Croft@noaa.gov) at 503-231-2119. Her mailing address is Lisa Croft, NOAA-NMFS, 525 NE Oregon St. Suite 500, Portland, OR. 97232-2778.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Brown
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Hydropower Division

Robert G. Walton
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Cc: Sue Ireland

