



## Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration  
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EXECUTIVE OFFICE

April 2, 2009

In reply refer to: A-7

### **To: Interested Stakeholders**

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the other federal Action Agencies (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation) are proposing to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the State of Washington (Washington). The proposed MOA provides a 9-year commitment for habitat projects in the Columbia River estuary to help strengthen populations of steelhead and salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Columbia River estuary includes the mainstem Columbia River from the mouth of the River at its confluence with the Pacific Ocean, up to Bonneville Dam, including tidally-influenced tributaries below Bonneville Dam. The Columbia River estuary includes important habitat for all Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead species, as well as a wide variety of other fish and wildlife species.

This proposed Estuary Habitat MOA provides for long-term funding certainty for estuary habitat projects. This proposed MOA is consistent with and will work in concert with the 2008 Biological Opinion issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-Fisheries for the Federal Columbia River Power System. This proposed Estuary Habitat MOA also supports BPA's implementation of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.

This proposed Estuary Habitat MOA increases BPA's commitment for estuary habitat actions by a total of \$1.8 million annually, in part through a reallocation of research, monitoring, and evaluation (RM&E) projects funded by BPA that will now be funded by the Corps of Engineers (Corps). The MOA also includes the Corps' commitment to seek appropriations of \$2.7 million to support the federal cost-share for the estuary habitat projects to be implemented by Washington to match with the increased habitat funding provided by BPA.

As a party to this Estuary Habitat MOA, Washington commits to using the funds to accomplish habitat actions to meet biological objectives linked to meeting the Action Agencies' commitments for steelhead and salmon protection, mitigation, and enhancement. Overall, with this 9-year Estuary Habitat MOA and on-going activities, the Action Agencies will support a nearly \$150 million program, including \$90 million for habitat projects, to benefit the fish and wildlife species of the Columbia River estuary, as depicted below:

	Pre-Estuary Habitat MOA			With this Estuary Habitat MOA			
Annual Planning Budgets (\$ million) for the Estuary							
	Habitat	RM&E	Estuary Total	Habitat	RM&E	Estuary Total	Increased Habitat Funding
BPA	3.5			5.3			1.8
Corps	2.0			4.7			2.7
BPA & Corps Combined		6.6			6.6		
Sub-Total	5.5	6.6	<b>12.1</b>	10.0	6.6	<b>16.6</b>	<b>4.5</b>
9-Year Total (\$ million)							
BPA & Corps Combined	49.5	59.4	<b>108.9</b>	90.0	59.4	<b>149.4</b>	<b>40.5</b>

In 2003, BPA prepared a policy level National Environmental Policy Act document, the Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan (FWIP) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The FWIP EIS examined the possible environmental consequences of alternative policies to guide the implementation and funding of BPA's fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery efforts. In the FWIP Record of Decision (ROD), BPA adopted a comprehensive and consistent policy that reflects regional fish and wildlife policy guidance. The FWIP ROD also provided for tiering future fish and wildlife decisions that are consistent with the adopted policy. Our preliminary conclusion is that BPA's actions proposed in this Estuary Habitat MOA are within the scope of the FWIP EIS and ROD.

BPA is seeking public comment on its proposal to enter into this Estuary Habitat MOA with Washington as negotiated. Consistent with BPA's commitment to a public process before making any tiered decision under the FWIP EIS and ROD, BPA is also requesting public comment on any associated environmental effects. Public input will be considered by BPA in making a decision; if BPA decides to enter into this Estuary Habitat MOA as proposed, BPA will issue a separate Estuary Habitat MOA ROD explaining its decision.

The proposed MOA may be viewed at <http://www.salmonrecovery.gov/>. If you would like to receive a hard copy, you may also call our toll-free document request line at (800) 622-4520 and leave a message with the name of the project, your complete mailing address and phone number.

**The comment period closes at 5:00 p.m. Pacific time on May 4, 2009.**

Comments may be submitted to BPA:

- 1) online at  
<http://www.bpa.gov/applications/publiccomments/OpenCommentListing.aspx>;
- 2) via mail to Bonneville Power Administration, Public Affairs Office – DKC-7,  
P.O. Box 14428, Portland, OR 97293-4428;
- 3) via fax to (503) 230-3285; or
- 4) by toll free telephone at (800) 622-4519.

***If you wish to receive a copy of the Estuary Habitat MOA ROD, your comment must include your complete mailing address: name, address, city, state, and zip code.*** All comments will be posted in their entirety with only the author's name and affiliation on BPA's Web site at <http://www.bpa.gov/applications/publiccomments/closedcommentlisting.aspx>.

This proposed Estuary Habitat MOA is a direct outcome of the enhanced communication and cooperation of the Action Agencies and regional sovereigns as we pursue our mutual goal of protecting and enhancing Columbia Basin fish and wildlife. We look forward to your comments on the proposed MOA.

Sincerely,

*/s/Stephen J. Wright*

Stephen J. Wright  
Administrator and Chief Executive Officer