



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
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EXECUTIVE OFFICE

APR 11 2009

In reply refer to: DKR-7

To: Interested Stakeholders

The Federal action agencies (Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Bureau of Reclamation) are proposing to enter into an agreement with the State of Montana to provide 10-year mutual commitments for fish restoration, particularly for resident fish (non-ocean-going) listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) such as bull trout. BPA is seeking public comment on the proposal to enter into the agreement as negotiated, as well as on associated environmental effects.

The action agencies believe the proposed agreement will enhance overall fish restoration efforts in the region, making mitigation for the hydro system significantly more effective through a common approach. The agreement supports the approach in NOAA Fisheries' draft biological opinion for listed salmon and steelhead and provides additional habitat protection actions for resident fish.

Background

This agreement would, for 10 years, promote a collaborative relationship between the parties centered around the shared fish restoration goals and priorities included in the agreement. BPA would make available \$15.5 million in 2009 to help implement priority fish habitat projects with the State of Montana. The State of Montana commits to accomplishing biological objectives with the funds, linked to meeting BPA's statutory requirements.

Consistent with its commitment to transparent processes and decisionmaking, BPA is providing customers and stakeholders the opportunity to review the proposed agreement before we enter into it. This opportunity for public input will also help BPA meet its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

BPA believes that entering into this agreement is consistent with BPA's programmatic Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan Environmental Impact Statement (FWIP EIS) prepared pursuant to the NEPA. BPA's Record of Decision (ROD) for that FWIP EIS adopted a comprehensive policy guiding the implementation and funding of the agency's fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery efforts.

For NEPA purposes, following a public comment period, if BPA determines that the decision to enter into this agreement is consistent with its FWIP EIS, BPA would prepare a ROD, tiered to the FWIP EIS and ROD. Many of the resident fish habitat actions that could be implemented under this agreement may be within the scope of the FWIP EIS and ROD. Others may require

additional environmental analyses and documentation before implementation. Prior to funding new on-the-ground activities not within the scope of the FWIP EIS and ROD, BPA would separately evaluate the environmental effects of the individual project proposals. All proposed actions would still be required to obtain appropriate legal coverage, permits, or approvals.

Comments will be accepted through April 23, 2008

BPA is now asking for public comment on the proposal to enter into this agreement as negotiated and on potential environmental effects of the proposed agreement. Comments will be accepted until close of business April 23, 2008. Comments may be submitted online at <http://www.bpa.gov/comment>, via e-mail to comment@bpa.gov, via mail to Bonneville Power Administration, Public Affairs Office – DKC-7, P.O. Box 14428, Portland, OR 97293-4428, or faxed to (503) 230-3285. You may also telephone us with your comments toll free at (800) 622-4519. All comments will be posted in their entirety, with the author's name and any affiliation, on BPA's Web site at: <http://www.bpa.gov/applications/publiccomments/OpenCommentListing.aspx>.

The proposed agreement may be viewed at the project Web site:

http://www.salmonrecovery.gov/biological_opinions/FCRPS/2007_biop/montpartner.cfm.

The action agencies thank the State of Montana for the hard work that went into developing this agreement. Together, we are setting an important new direction for the region – more cooperative and more effective for the fish.

Sincerely,



Stephen J. Wright
Administrator and Chief Executive Officer