



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NORTHWESTERN DIVISION
PO BOX 2870
PORTLAND, OR 97208-2870

January 23, 2020

Subject: Transmittal of the Final Columbia River System Biological Assessment for the operation and maintenance of the fourteen federal multiple use dam and reservoir projects in the Columbia River System for formal Section 7 Endangered Species Act consultation and Essential Fish Habitat consultation under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

Barry Thom
Regional Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NMFS West Coast Region
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 1100
Portland, Oregon 97232

Mary Abrams
Deputy Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Region
911 NE 11th Ave.
Portland, Oregon 97232

Dear Mr. Thom and Ms. Abrams:

On behalf of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), and the Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) (collectively termed the Action Agencies), the Corps is transmitting this final Biological Assessment (BA) to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (collectively, the Services). The Action Agencies submitted a Draft BA December 20, 2019 to initiate formal consultation under Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System (CRS), fourteen federal multiple-use dam and reservoir projects that are managed in a coordinated manner, for a 15-year period.

This final CRS BA confirms there have not been significant changes to the proposed action since submitting the Draft BA in December. Revisions made since the December draft include the addition of clarifying language to the proposed action to address the comments received from the Services and incorporation of refinements to the proposed action to ensure consistency with the Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Preferred Alternative (PA). In the effects analysis

provided in Chapter 3, we corrected errors, attempted to minimize redundancies and improve readability, and added a Cumulative Effects section. The summary of effects in Chapter 4 and the Essential Fish Habitat analysis in Chapter 5 have been slightly expanded to be more thorough. And finally, we have corrected citations as necessary.

The Action Agencies reiterate our request for preparation of biological opinions in fulfillment of interagency consultation responsibilities under the ESA by June 2020. The Action Agencies are also reiterating our request for consultation with NMFS under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. For the USFWS, this submittal confirms that this final CRS BA supersedes the 2016 FCRPS BA submitted by the Action Agencies in December 2016, and provides an updated action and analysis.

This ESA consultation is being conducted in concert with the CRSO NEPA process. The PA from the CRSO EIS accordingly forms the basis for the proposed action described in this Final BA. The Action Agencies are continuing to engage with tribal sovereigns, cooperating agencies, and other stakeholders on the CRSO EIS PA prior to the release of the draft EIS in February 2020, and will be receiving comments on the PA during the public comment period following release of the draft EIS. Should there be any changes made during the EIS process relevant to the ESA consultation, the Action Agencies will promptly notify the Services.

In addition to the Final CRS BA, the Action Agencies are also submitting the latest draft version of the "Process for Adaptive Implementation of the Flexible Spill Operational Component of the Columbia River System Spill Operations" (Adaptive Implementation Framework or AIF). An updated version of the AIF, along with this Final CRS BA, will be attached as appendices to the CRSO draft EIS when it is scheduled for release and public comment in February.

We appreciate your coordination on the BA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frances E. Coffey', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Frances E. Coffey, PE, PMP
Director, Programs