

PO Box 791
John Day, OR 97845
September 28, 2006

2006010048

Mark Walker
Director Of Public Affairs
NPCC 851 SW 6th Ave Suite, 1100
Portland, OR 97204

Subject: Letter of support for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, John Day
Fish Habitat Enhancement Program (#1984-021-00).

Dear Mr. Walker:

I am a landowner who is currently enrolled in a 15-year fence project with Russ Powell and his riparian fence program along the John Day River. This project has provided significant benefits to my ranching operation through improved riparian health/function, better livestock management, and improved livestock health. Benefits such as these, usually do not promote a substantial enough monetary gain to warrant their implementation by a ranching operation. Without the cost-share that Russ's program brings to the table, it would not have been possible for the operation financially to justify the added cost of the initial fence and the labor involved in its maintenance.

Over the past 5 years since the fence was constructed, a release of cottonwood, willow, and birch trees has occurred along the river corridor, dramatically improving the fish habitat and riparian health of the reach. The increase in vegetative growth has significantly reduced bank erosion, improving water quality and preventing the loss of very expensive farm ground. Trees are being recruited and growing rapidly to become a future source of shade and large wood debris for fish habitat diversity. The vegetation filter buffer created between the areas of livestock use and the river has also reduced the risk of e-coli contamination occurring through the ranch and provided a niche for countless wildlife species.

The incorporation of the riparian corridor fence with several new cross-fences and the development of a new water system, have improved the forage production of the ranch. The grazing rotation that was developed with the fencing increased carrying capacities by approximately 15%. I have also noticed a significant reduction in the amount of herd sickness, since the major water source was changed from the river to a well/tank system. These are both benefits that could not have been attained by the ranch without the help from the John Day Fish Habitat Enhancement Program.

Current federal riparian improvement programs have not fit well in this area because of the minimum fence set back standards. The Upper John Day Basin is unique in the fact that the majority of the irrigated productive farm ground lies along the narrow flood plains of the John Day River and its tributaries. This limited area is vital to many

OCT 05 2006

production agricultural operations in the basin, to produce winter feed for livestock. Often a cooperator is asked to give up substantial amounts of cropland to meet federal program requirements. Most producers in this basin cannot give up these productive areas, therefore they are not eligible for the cost-share. Russ's program has filled a local need for a fencing program that is more flexible to producers.

The John Day Habitat Program has been successful in pioneering the idea that riparian protection is the key to fish habitat improvement. They have also been able to show agricultural producers that these protection improvements can be made through their program without having a detrimental effect to the ranching operations. In most instances, producers find benefit with the implementation of the fencing program. It is intuitively obvious that a healthy riparian area has a positive influence on water quality and fish habitat. Eliminating or reducing the funds of a successful and locally endorsed program is ridiculous in my mind. The John Day Fish Habitat Enhancement Program is poster child for Watershed Restoration and should be used as a template for how good conservation can be implemented in a cooperative, non-regulatory way.

Sincerely,



Jason Kehrberg