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June 6, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fish Committee Members

FROM: Kerry Berg

SUBJECT: Presentation on Water Transactions in the Bitterroot Subbasin

BACKGROUND:

Presenter: Jed Whiteley, Project Manager, Clark Fork Coalition

Summary: Jed joined the Clark Fork Coalition staff in 2013 and works to develop and implement restoration solutions for impaired tributary streams throughout the Clark Fork. Jed specializes in the development of flow and instream restoration projects in the Bitterroot Valley and the Middle Clark Fork including the use of funding from the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program (CBWTP).

To enhance stream flow, the CBWTP works through locally based entities to acquire water rights voluntarily from willing landowners. Using temporary and permanent water rights acquisitions and other incentive-based approaches, the CBWTP supports grantees in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana to assist landowners who wish to voluntarily restore flows to key fish habitat. Voluntary, market-based water transactions provide an effective and fair way to balance out-of-stream water uses with the need to maintain stream flow for imperiled fish.

Relevance: As early as 1991, the Council's fish and wildlife programs identified water transactions as a way to increase flows for fish. In the 2000 program, the Council recommended that the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) establish a funding agreement for land and water acquisitions.

In 2002, BPA and the Council established the CBWTP to fund water transactions to put more water into the basin's tributaries. The program is administered through a partnership between BPA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.