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April 30, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Mark Fritsch

SUBJECT: Recommendation regarding approval required by the Plateau Province Review for Yakima Habitat Improvement Project #2002-038-00.

Action

The City of Yakima has submitted to the Council a Master Plan entitled *Yakima Habitat Improvement Project Master Plan* (see attachment 1). This submittal is intended to address conditions placed on the project *Protect Normative Structure and Function of Critical Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat Project* - #2002-038-00 or (Proposal #25100) during the Columbia Plateau provincial review. (See final issue memo dated decision on November 8, 2001). The condition was added at the suggestion of the sponsor based on comments received during the provincial review process. At this time the sponsor is requesting approval of the master plan and additional funding to initiate the original intent of the project at your meeting in Walla Walla.

Recommendation

Council staff recommends that the Council advise Bonneville that the conditions placed on this project have been addressed and that this project can proceed to be implemented as defined and with the funds established during the provincial review \$349,000/year through FY 2004). Additional funds, if needed, will need to be sought through future sponsor requests in subsequent Council project funding processes.

Background

The primary goal of this project is to acquire lands for the restoration and protection of aquatic/terrestrial habitat, improvements of water quality, and reconnection of the flood plain to establish functioning riparian zones within an urban environment. The project focuses on the

habitat within the Yakima Urban Growth Area including the Yakima River with emphasis on the tributaries in this area.

The project was a new start as part of the solicitation associated with the Columbia Plateau Province. The project was originally entitled *Protect Normative Structure and Function of Critical Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat in the Yakima UGA*, and was approved for funding at a reduced level to accomplish initial planning and assessment¹. The recommendation as part of the Issue summary for Columbia Plateau provincial review decision on November 8, 2001 is as follows.

“NMFS has designated this project as consistent with the overall BiOp off-site mitigation strategy and actions (assigning a “400” rating) as a riparian implementation project. The ISRP determined that this project is “Fundable in part at reduced costs as proposed by project sponsors.” The Council is recommending partial funding for this project (\$349,000 in each fiscal year 2002 through 2004). The ISRP disagreed with CBFWA “do not fund” recommendation and supported funding the proposal in part. The Council funding recommendation is for that portion of the proposal supported by the ISRP. Subsequent funding remains contingent upon completion of the assessments, integration of this program with other projects in the Selah floodplain and Council approval.”

On April 22, 2003 the Council received a Master Plan entitled *Yakima Habitat Improvement Project Master Plan* intended to address the issues and concerns raised during the provincial review and address the condition that was placed on the project. The City of Yakima feels that the Master Plan meets the condition placed on this project and has maintained the objectives and tasks as part of the original proposal.

Analysis

The Master Plan received and reviewed by the Council staff seems to be thorough and complete. In addition, two letters of support for the process in the development of the Master Plan and the projects vision as a whole were received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Reclamation.² The document is user friendly and contains the following sections.

- Summary of ongoing and completed fish and wildlife projects within the Yakima Urban Growth Area

¹ Yakama Issue 1: *New proposals in the Yakima subbasin*. As discussed in the general issues of the Issue summary for Columbia Plateau provincial review decision memorandum, there was not sufficient funding to initiate all of the new proposals that were rated as “fundable” by the ISRP and rated as “High Priority” by CBFWA in the Columbia Plateau province within the basinwide funding target of \$186 million for Fiscal Year 2002. This was due to the anticipation that sufficient funds would then not be available to initiate new proposals in the provinces that remain to be reviewed in the provincial review process at that time. Therefore, the Council and its staff have worked with local entities to further prioritize new work, and asked them to put a premium on new work that represents consensus of the state and tribal resource managers and is consistent with Bonneville’s BiOp needs. In the Yakima subbasin, a collaborative effort was undertaken to prioritize Fiscal Year 2002 new needs along these guidelines. Proposal #25100 was rated in this process as one of the highest priority at that time.

² Both letters were received by the Council on April 24, 2003.

- A detailed description of the project coordination, include details on the Technical Working Group that was formed to assist in the development of the master plan
- A detailed approach to acquiring parcels and the description of the criteria and parcel prioritization used to define this approach
- An extensive listing of recommended acquisition projects
- A strategy for acquisition and long term management of the lands
- A monitoring and evaluation plan to document anticipated benefits to fish and wildlife.

As outlined in the cover letter received as part of the Master Plan from the City of Yakima a request is being made for subsequent funding. As part of the provincial decision the Council approved \$349,000 for each Fiscal Year 2002 through 2004. In the Fiscal Year 2003 the City of Yakima feels that with the amount approved (\$349,000) they can maintain project coordination, establish Site Steward Position, increase the information and knowledge of the public, continued coordination with the TWG, and maintain the project's website³ (Objectives 1,2 and 4).

The approved funding does not address the acquisition (Objective 3), and monitoring activities that were in the original proposal but deferred as part of the Council's provincial decision. Due to the current fiscal climate associated with the Fish and Wildlife Program and the programmatic issues still needing to be resolved related to land acquisitions, it is not possible at this time to make this project whole with funding beyond the \$349,000 previously recommended. Extensive work is needed in the basin before a full understanding of funding targets (i.e. expense and capital) is achieved, and there remain basinwide programmatic issues (e.g. land acquisitions) that must be resolved before out-years funding can be defined for this project. Until these issues are resolved, there is no capacity to make a recommendation for additional funds.

The project has met the conditions as defined during the provincial review and the project can proceed as effectively as it is capable with the funds previously identified in the provincial review

³ <http://yakimahip.golder.com/html/ID-A1.asp>

Attachment 1: Letter received on April 22, 2003 from the City of Yakima requesting approval of the master plan and additional funding for Project 2002-038-00.

April 22, 2003

Judi Danielson, Chair
Northwest Power Planning Council
851 SW Sixth Ave., Suite 1020
Portland, OR 97204-1348

RE: **BPA Project Name:** Habitat Acquisition in the Yakima Basin
BPA Project Number: #2002-038-00
BPA Contract No.: 10171

Dear Ms. Danielson:

Attached is a copy of our Master Plan entitled *Yakima Habitat Improvement Project Master Plan*. We are providing you with this document to inform you of our progress, request Fiscal Year 2004 implementation funding, request additional funds for land acquisitions, and obtain input about our project.

To provide some background, according to the ISRP's "Final Review of Fiscal Year 2002 Project Proposals for the Columbia Plateau Province," the Yakima Habitat Improvement Project, previously entitled *Protect Normative Structure and Function of Critical Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat in the Yakima UGA*, was fundable in part at a reduced level as proposed by project sponsors. The intention was that the reduced budget would accomplish initial planning and assessment in this first year. Additional implementation funding (for acquisition of riparian habitat) would be contingent on completion of the following:

1. Technical assessments;
2. Quantitative measures of the habitat protected and/or value to fish and wildlife (e.g., quantitative justification for recommended acquisitions);
3. Integration of this program with other BOR and Yakama Nation habitat protection related projects;
4. Coordination with the fish and wildlife co-managers in the subbasin; and,
5. Indications that proposed activities have the agreement of other agencies within the basin.

We feel that our Habitat Master Plan meets all of these requirements. For example:

1. As part of this project, a technical assessment and detailed literature review of all past and current projects conducted in the subject area was performed. Data from this assessment were compiled in GIS format for use in providing quantitative justification for habitat purchase.
2. The Habitat Master Plan for this project includes quantitative justification for proposed habitat acquisition projects within the Yakima Urban Area. We have developed an innovative GIS based ranking model to prioritize parcel acquisition based on a set of physical and biological criteria that represent an overall measure of riparian health in the watershed.

3. In order to avoid duplication of effort, this project focuses on the tributaries to the Yakima River, while the BOR and Yakama Nation acquisition projects focus on the mainstem Yakima River. We continue to meet with representatives from BOR and the Yakama Nation to ensure supportive partnering in one another's efforts. Several TWG members have also expressed interest in stewardship and ongoing management of lands acquired through this project effort.
4. This project involved the establishment of a Technical Working Group (TWG) that represents most, if not all, fish and wildlife agencies/interests in the subbasin. The criteria used to rank acquisition projects and produce the final recommendations in the plan were developed by this TWG. This group is dedicated to coordination in the subbasin and has decided to continue meeting as a steering committee to assure not only project success, but that this coordination effort continues unabated. Major players include: the Bureau of Reclamation, the Yakama Nation, Yakima County, WDFW, USFWS, Conservation District, City of Yakima, the Nature Conservancy, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District, and others.

Now that we have completed the Habitat Master Plan and because the performance period for this project will end on May 31, 2003, we are requesting your approval of subsequent funding. According to your funding recommendations, you approved partial funding for this project (\$349,000 in each fiscal year 2002 through 2004). This amount (\$349,000) will allow us to accomplish the following general tasks for Fiscal Year 2003:

- Continue Project Coordinator position (eg., project administration; coordinate education and outreach activities; liaison with city planning, coordinate restoration activities; budget, invoices, city council liaison, coordination with BPA; TWG oversight and planning; coordination with watershed and subbasin planning processes; YRBWEP and Yakama Nation coordination; ESA coordination; solicit matching funds)
- Establish Site Steward Position or Subcontractor (e.g., identify willing landowners and discuss restoration of tributary habitat, conduct baseline assessments, coordinate with existing volunteer/service, work to secure supplementary acquisition/restoration funds/grants, work to address related critical habitat projects as outlined in the Master Plan, address stormwater outfall issues)
- Education and outreach
- TWG meeting preparation and coordination: Coordinate with TWG members to identify other, non-acquisition projects including those identified in the Master Plan
- Ongoing website maintenance

The requested funding does not account for actual acquisition and future land management, evaluation and monitoring activities. However, several of the identified parcels for acquisition have pending applications for rezone. We need to move quickly on these parcels in order to be successful in protecting some of the highest ranking, riparian habitat in the UGA. As such, we are requesting additional funds to initiate an opportunity for a public land acquisition program. If additional funds are not available at this time to move the program forward, we would ask your guidance for the 'Next Step.'


Through opportunities provided by the development of this Plan we have established a broad base of partners, some of them we have known in the past and others are new to our involvements. In the totality of the process and the development of the Plan these partnerships have been extended across

jurisdictional boundaries. As a direct result of these relationships, the program will benefit the environment, as well as help fulfill the needs encompassed in the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program to meet the requirements of the Biological Opinion. With the onset of subbasin planning for the Yakima Basin, we have been asked to include our Plan in that process. Delaying and/or discontinuing this project will have substantial negative impacts on the new and renewed relationships developed and severely impair our ability to integrate the identified issues and solutions into a comprehensive/planned approach to repairing and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat in this portion of the Yakima Basin.

Lastly, we would appreciate receiving any comments or thoughts you might have that would help us to make the Habitat Master Plan stronger.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact me should there be a need to further explain our methodology, or to provide clarification for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Dueane Calvin, Water/Irrigation Manager
City of Yakima

cc: Ed Bartlett, Chair, Fish & Wildlife Program
Doug Marker, Director - Fish and Wildlife Division
Mark Fritsch, Fish and Wildlife Division
Lisa Dally Wilson, Golder Associates, Inc.
Jessica Wilcox - Bonneville Power Administration