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April 16, 2009

Mr. William C. Maslen
Manager, Fish and Wildlife Division
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208

Dear Mr. Maslen:

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the Council's decision on a Columbia River Fish Accord proposal. This recommendation was made by the Council at its meeting on April 14, 2009.

In addition, a purpose of this letter is to inform the project sponsor and other interested parties of the status of this Council action. The following is a summary of the action taken by the Council at the meeting in March.

Develop a Master Plan for a Rearing Facility to Enhance Selected Populations of White Sturgeon in the Columbia River Basin, Project # 2007-155-00

In 2008-2009, Bonneville, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (the "Action Agencies") signed agreements with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation (CTWSRO), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN), and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC). The agreement with these Tribes and CRITFC is referred to as the Three Treaty Tribes MOA. The Action Agencies also signed agreements with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT), the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (SBT), and the states of Idaho, Montana and Washington. These agreements, the Columbia Basin Fish Accords, fund actions that will deliver specific, scientifically-sound results for the region's fish and wildlife.

As set forth in the guidance document outlining the review process for the Accords, the Council recognizes Bonneville's commitment to Accord projects. The Accords do not, however, alter the Council's responsibilities with respect to independent science review or the Council's role following such review. As with all projects in the Fish and Wildlife Program, Accord projects are subject to review by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) and the Council provides funding recommendations based on full consideration of the ISRP's report and the Council's Program.

The goal of this project is to restore productive, viable sturgeon populations and fishery opportunities in the reservoirs associated with the Federal Columbia River Power System portions of the mid-Columbia and lower Snake River reservoirs. The objective of this project is to develop a collaborative and comprehensive strategic plan for sturgeon conservation, restoration and management (i.e., Objective 1). The strategic plan will be developed in a facilitated workshop process involving co-managers, significant stakeholders, and technical experts in order develop a consensus for goals and strategies for restoration of depleted sturgeon populations in mainstem reservoirs. In addition, if necessary, objectives include following a step review process to implement hatchery-related actions if identified in the comprehensive strategic plan (Objective 2 and 3).

On February 24, 2009, the Council received from Bonneville a set of two Columbia Basin Fish Accords proposals. Included in this set was a proposal from the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) for # 2007-155-00, *Sturgeon Strategic and Hatchery Master Plan*.¹

The proposal was submitted to the ISRP for review, and on April 1, 2009 the ISRP provided a review (ISRP document 2009-10). The ISRP found that the proposal “Meets Scientific Review Criteria (In Part, Qualified).”

The ISRP supports the sequence of the project as proposed and reviewed with an “In Part, Qualified” recommendation. The ISRP states that Objective 1 meets the review criteria. The ISRP determined that the remaining objectives associated with Objective 2 (i.e., Step Review) and 3 (M&E implementation of hatchery actions) are dependant on the outcome of the planning effort addressed in Objective 1 and future step reviews associated with Objective 2. Thus, a scientific review of Objectives 2 and 3 will be contingent on the direction in the strategic plan identified in Objective 1. As part of this review the ISRP also provided helpful comments that may assist the CRITFC with the step review if that objective is pursued.

Based on the ISRP review the Council supports this project. This recommendation is conditioned by the understanding that future activities associated with Objective 2 and 3 are dependant on a future step review.

Sincerely,

Tony Grover
Director, Fish and Wildlife Division

¹ The proposal is listed in the May 2008 agreement in Attachment B; Hatchery Planning, O&M. New, and Hatchery Capital. In addition, detail is also provided in Attachment G, Sturgeon.

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