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June 2, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Jeff Allen, Idaho Council Staff

SUBJECT: Clark Fork Delta Restoration Project on Lake Pend Oreille

BACKGROUND:

Presenter: Chip Corsi, Regional Supervisor, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Summary: Extensive bank erosion has occurred to islands and shorelines in the Clark Fork River delta, resulting in losses of soil, native riparian and wetland vegetation, as well as the quantity and quality of fish and wildlife habitat. This erosion is the result of wave action and water level fluctuations of Lake Pend Oreille due to the operation of the Albeni Falls dam. In addition, about 15 – 25 percent of all habitat loss in the delta is attributed to the operation of the Cabinet Gorge dam located upstream on the Clark Fork River. The altered hydrology in the Clark Fork River and delta has resulted in changes in the wetland and aquatic vegetation cover, such that many of the delta's wetland functions are severely impaired.

Relevance: Ecologically, the Clark Fork River delta is important for providing connectivity between mountain ranges, providing nutrient and sediment transport, improving water quality, and for providing essential cover and feeding areas for migrating and breeding songbirds, waterbirds, waterfowl, raptors and numerous other species of wildlife. The Clark Fork River delta area is also extremely important to the local community and is culturally

important to several tribes, including the Kalispel Tribe, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Confederated Tribes of the Salish and Kootenai and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe of Indians.

The goal of the restoration project is to protect areas vulnerable to erosion while improving and diversifying key riparian and wetland habitats behind the protection to restore ecological function in the Clark Fork River delta. To meet this goal the project has two focuses:

1. To protect existing areas within the delta from further erosion using environmentally compatible stabilization methods, and,
2. To restore and enhance the edge and interior areas; restoration and enhancement activities will add habitat complexity with large woody debris; promote diverse native riparian vegetation growth such as black cottonwood, dogwood and willow; and reduce non-native invasive reed canarygrass.

Background: Idaho Department of Fish and Game has worked with a coalition of partners (NWPCC, BPA, Avista, Ducks Unlimited, Kalispel Tribe, BLM, COE, NRCS, USFWS, and several NGOS and local communities) over the past three years to develop and implement a restoration project for the delta. Phase one of the project is being completed now, as newly restored island habitat is being planted with ~100,000 native shrubs and trees. Primary funding has been from BPA and Avista ratepayers, with considerable in-kind match from other partners.