



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
3502 Highway 30
LA GRANDE, OREGON 97850

May 18, 2016

Henry Lorenzen, Chair
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

Re: Comment for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs John Day River Watershed Restoration Strategy (Project #2007-397-00).

Dear Mr. Lorenzen,

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), La Grande Field Office would like to provide comment and support for the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon's (CTWS) John Day River Watershed Restoration Strategy. I understand there was a Public Comment window for the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (NPCC) review, but being unaware of those dates, I believe I missed that window. As such, I am writing to you as an interested party in seeing the strategy continue.

As the Senior Fish Biologist with NMFS in the La Grande Office, I have worked closely with the CTWS in their effort to fund and/or implement actions within the John Day River subbasin that promote the conservation of aquatic and riparian resources, both at the site-specific and watershed scales. Our partnership within the basin has focused on anadromous fish species; Mid-Columbia River (MCR) steelhead and spring/summer Chinook salmon.

The increased regional attention to ESA-listed species and Tribal-Treaty Trust resources placed on the John Day River subbasin brought a floodgate of partners to the table with a wide array of interests and project proposals; all competing for a limited amount of restoration dollars that come from a handful of funding streams. Early funding and project selection decisions were widely variable; often out of sequence in time or location, incomplete in design, missing the targeted restoration objective, and lacking a strategic watershed view. As such, in early 2013, the CTWS partnered with approximately 20 agencies and several land owners within the area, to develop a mechanism that would put in place a transparent, focused, and scientifically supported project selection decision-making process for implementing restoration actions within the upper John Day watershed.

To begin this process, the CTWS established Science and Stakeholder Technical Advisory Committees (TAC). The Science TAC, of which I was a member, was tasked with developing a decision matrix for project prioritization that could be used in the annual/biannual project funding decision process. The resulting product and approach was initially implemented for the 2014-15 project funding cycle, and with feedback and review at that time, was improved upon for the 2015-2016 funding cycle.

The results of using the CTWS decision matrix and overarching strategy document has already shown success; both in the kind of restoration actions being proposed and the quality of project designs submitted, as well as location and habitat limiting factor being addressed on the landscape; all occurring in an efficient, effective, transparent, and collaborative manner. The NMFS will continue to stay involved



in this effort, and support the process as best we can so as to help maximize the successes of the implementation partners to promote the recovery and conservation of listed fish in the John Day River subbasin.

In summary, the CTWS John Day River Watershed Restoration Strategy establishes clear goals, outlines the necessary processes and procedures, and has created a robust and transparent project prioritization and selection process for the allocation of limited habitat restoration funds. This strategy uses the best available science, is compatible with and supports the MCR Steelhead Recovery Plan, and helps create a cohesive guidance document for use by a multitude of partners in their collective efforts to restore aquatic resources, including the tributary habitats of ESA-listed species (MCR steelhead and Columbia River bull trout) in the upper John Day River watersheds.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide my input to what I believe is an important topic, tributary habitat restoration, for the partners of the John Day River subbasin. If you or your staff would like to discuss this subject further with me, please feel free to contact me at 541-975-1835 x229. I can also be reached via email at: Randy.Tweten@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,



Randy Tweten
Senior Fish Biologist

cc: Kendra Coles, NPCC, kcoles@nwcouncil.org
Erik Merrill, NPCC, emerrill@nwcouncil.org
Amy Charette, CTWSRO, amy.charette@ctwsbnr.org