



## Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration  
P.O. Box 3621  
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

March 19, 1999

In reply refer to:

*[Letter from Judi Johansen dated March 19, 1999 (signed on behalf of Federal Executives from NMFS, USF&W, USBR, BIA, BLM, EPA, COE, USFS, and BPA). Letter sent to Columbia Basin Forum Management Committee, Framework Management Committee, 13 Columbia Basin Tribal Chairs, Northwest Governors, and Northwest Congressional Delegation. A similar letter was sent to other key Regional Stakeholders.]*

Dear «Name»:

On behalf of the National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, and Bonneville Power Administration, I would like to affirm our commitment to work with the States, Tribes, and regional interests as we proceed with upcoming decisions in the Columbia River Basin under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As you know, the Federal agencies face critical decisions in the year ahead regarding recovery actions for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, bulltrout, snails, and other species listed under ESA. Our goal is to assure broad-based regional involvement in, and ultimately, broad-based regional support for these ESA decisions.

We believe that the Federal agencies must speak in a well-coordinated fashion as we approach critical decisions related to the biological and economic impacts of how to operate the Federal hydrosystem and the interrelationship with other Federal actions that affect listed species. To this end, the Federal agencies listed above have formed a caucus group of Federal agency representatives with responsibility for staff work and analysis for these decisions.

Please be assured that the Federal Caucus will not operate in a vacuum. The Federal Caucus intends to work with regional interests in developing and analyzing alternatives, coordinating with, and building upon, products of the regional Multi-species Framework Project, and addressing policy and planning issues within the Columbia River Basin Forum. Members of the Federal Caucus will be reaching out to State governments and Tribal governments and regional stakeholders as we prepare our working papers and proposals. We are also planning public involvement later this year and look forward to an open and constructive exchange of views with the region on these critical issues.

The Federal agencies have significant tasks to complete in the near future: an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration study; and Section 7 consultation on the operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System, which is required by the ESA. The Bonneville Power Administration, Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation will prepare biological assessments, and the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will prepare biological opinions addressing proposed operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System, prior to the spring migration in 2000. The agencies cannot delegate these specific responsibilities. The Lower Snake River study draft report and EIS and the draft biological assessments for operation of the hydropower system are scheduled to be released in late summer/early fall of 1999.

The Federal Caucus will formulate alternatives for operating the Federal hydropower system within the context of interrelated actions for and effects on other listed species, and across the life-cycle influences: harvest, hatcheries, habitat, as well as hydropower—the 4Hs. The Federal Caucus has adopted a fairly aggressive schedule to address the ESA, Tribal Treaty and trust obligations, and other applicable laws. A “Four-H paper” will attempt to bring these actions for all the sectors together. A draft document is expected to be complete in late summer/early fall. The various Federal documents should coincide with the Multi-Species Framework analysis of alternatives scheduled for release during that same timeframe. We intend to work closely with regional interests through the Framework and Forum processes as these options are developed. We also intend to rely as much as possible on actions which generate regional consensus.

We also take this opportunity to affirm that the options developed by the Federal Caucus will recognize tribal sovereignty as expressed through relevant Treaties and Executive Orders, including Tribal trust responsibilities as outlined in President Clinton’s Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies regarding Government-to-Government Relations (April 29, 1994).

The enclosed February 16, 1999, memorandum signed by five of the regional Federal executives, outlines a work plan and deadlines and further explains why the Federal Caucus was formed.

If you would like to find out more about the activities of the Federal Caucus, please contact Danny Consenstein at the National Marine Fisheries Service, (206) 526-4506.

Sincerely,

[Signed]

Judith A. Johansen  
Administrator and Chief Executive Officer

Enclosure

cc:

Forum Management Committee  
Framework Management Committee  
Northwest Congressional Delegation  
13 Columbia Basin Tribal Chairs  
Northwest Governors  
Northwest Congressional Delegation  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Forest Service  
Bureau of Reclamation, PN Region  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Bureau of Land Management  
Environmental Protection Agency