

**FEDERAL CAUCUS
TALKING POINTS
FCRPS 1999 DECISION
March 1999**

KEY MESSAGES

- **The Federal Caucus is developing a conceptual multi-species recovery plan.**
 - Defines Federal obligations consistent with ESA, Indian treaties and other Federal laws; and non-Federal activities necessary for recovery of ESA-listed species in the Columbia Basin
 - Key Products: Biological Assessment/Biological Opinion for the FCRPS, Lower Snake EIS and “Four-H Paper” (draft recovery plan).

- **On track for making a decision in 1999.**
 - Plan to make a decision (or at least a recommended decision) in late 1999 regarding the major question of drawdown of the Lower Snake projects.
 - Other H’s (harvest, hatcheries, habitat) will be addressed in “Four-H Paper”.

- **Federal agencies have non-delegable responsibilities.**
 - Legal and statutory decision making authority cannot be delegated for this decision.
 - The Federal Caucus will coordinate preparation of key products.

- **Coordination between the Federal Caucus, the Forum, and the Framework will occur.**
 - Framework products will be coordinated with Federal Caucus products.
 - Columbia Basin Forum will serve as the policy level coordination body for Basin-wide fish and wildlife issues, proposals, and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

List of Federal Agencies involved:

- Currently a group of Federal agencies, called the Federal Caucus, which includes NMFS, Corps, Reclamation, BPA, EPA, BIA, BLM, FWS and Forest Service, is working on a number of common regional fish and wildlife issues.

More on the Products:

- A major goal of the Federal Caucus is development of a multi-species recovery plan that defines Federal obligations consistent with the ESA and describes non-Federal activities necessary for recovery of ESA-listed species in the Columbia Basin. The Caucus will coordinate the preparation of several products that will be used in development of the plan:

- Biological Assessments on long-term operation and configuration of the FCRPS and off site mitigation funded by BPA prepared by the Corps, Reclamation and BPA;
- The Corps’ Lower Snake River EIS;
- A “Four-H Paper” that describes the hydro and non-hydro (hatchery, habitat, and harvest) actions necessary to recover ESA-listed species in the Basin; and
- NMFS and FWS Biological Opinions on long-term operation and configuration of the FCRPS that lay out the actions needed to avoid jeopardy to ESA-listed anadromous and resident species in the Columbia Basin.

More on Coordination:

- Members of the Federal Caucus are actively participating in the Framework Project and serve on the Columbia Basin Forum. The Federal Caucus will coordinate its products with the products of the Framework. The Caucus is also coordinating with the Framework Economic and Ecological workgroups.
- The alternatives and associated analyses regarding ecosystem and economic impacts developed for the Framework Project should prove useful in developing the Federally mandated multi-species plan for recovering ESA-listed species.
- The Federal agencies are participating in the Columbia River Basin Forum, which also includes the Northwest states and Columbia Basin tribes. The purpose of the Columbia River Basin Forum, as stated in its Memorandum of Agreement, is to provide a high-level policy forum to coordinate the use of its members’ respective authorities in addressing fish and wildlife management and related habitat issues in the Columbia Basin.

The Federal agencies are committed to consulting with all affected Tribes in the basin. The Tribal Caucus is recognized as an important vehicle for communication with the Tribes in addition to the Forum.