



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Central Washington Field Office
215 Melody Lane, Suite 119
Wenatchee, Washington, 98801
Phone: (509) 665-3508 Fax: (509) 665-3509



In Reply Refer To:
CWFO

November 6, 2003

The Honorable Magalie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20426

RE: Endangered Species Consultation related to the Anadromous Fish Agreement and Habitat Conservation Plans for the Wells, Rocky Reach, and Rock Island Hydroelectric Projects, FERC Nos. 2149, 2145, and 943.

Dear Secretary Salas:

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is pleased to join in the submission of the Anadromous Fish Agreements and Habitat Conservation Plans for the Wells, Rocky Reach and Rock Island Hydroelectric Projects (the "HCPs") to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission).

The Service believes that incorporation of the HCPs as license amendments for these facilities may affect the threatened Columbia River distinct population segment of bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), threatened bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), threatened grizzly bears (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and endangered Ute ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*).

The Service takes this opportunity to suggest a process for expediting the section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act ("ESA") consultations that we expect will occur as part of your review of the license amendment package. As part of the HCP process, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) conducted an analysis of issues in connection with the issuance of separate incidental take permits for the operation of three hydroelectric projects pursuant to the HCPs. In performing this analysis, NOAA Fisheries issued an Environmental Impact Statement, three separate Biological Opinions, and a Record of Decision. In addition, NOAA Fisheries prepared Environmental Assessments/Finding of No Significant Impacts, and Biological Opinions for each of the separate incidental take permits for the operation of hatcheries pursuant to the HCPs.

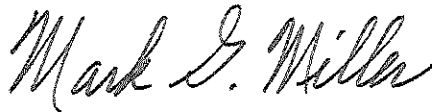
To expedite formal consultation, a biological evaluation of the effects of implementing the HCPs on Service listed species has been prepared by the PUDs and has been included with the applications submitting the HCPs to the Commission.

If the Commission proposes to approve the HCPs and adopt license amendments as proposed in the applications, at the Commission's direction, the Service will consider the incidental take permits, National Environmental Policy Act documents, biological opinions, records of decisions, and the biological evaluations on Service listed species submitted with the HCP submissions as a sufficient biological assessment related to the effects of the HCPs on listed species.

Upon the Commission's request to initiate formal consultations related to the effect of its proposed actions on listed species, the Service is prepared to expeditiously complete the biological opinions and incidental take statements under section 7(a)(2) of the ESA.

The Service looks forward to working with the Commission to approve the license amendment packages and complete formal consultation. Questions should be directed to Gregg Kurz of my staff at (509)-665-3508, extension 22 or Gregg_Kurz@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark G. Miller".

Supervisor

CC: USFWS, Portland, (Nolan M. Shishido)
USFWS, Wenatchee, (Gregg L. Kurz)
USFWS, Portland, (Estyn Mead)
NOAA Fisheries, Portland, (Brian J. Brown)
NOAA Fisheries, Portland, (Ritchie Graves)