

APPENDIX C

Endangered Species Act Correspondence



United States Department of the Interior

IDAHO FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE

Northern Idaho Field Office
11103 East Montgomery Drive
Spokane Valley, WA 99206



July 19, 2011

Mr. Evan Lewis
Chief, Environmental and Cultural Resources Branch
Department of the Army
Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
PO Box 3755
Seattle, Washington 98124-3755

Subject: Flexible Winter Power Operations at Albeni Falls Dam (FWS Reference:
14420-2011-TA-0248; File: 341.100)

Mr. Lewis,

Thank you for your July 8, 2011 letter referencing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) and Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) proposal to implement Flexible Winter Power Operations (FWPO) at Albeni Falls Dam. Your letter was received in our office on July 14, 2011, and requested the Service's determination that: 1) the FWPO is described in the Corps' and BPA's 1999 Multi-Species Biological Assessment of the Federal Columbia Power System (BA); and 2) the effects analysis in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) subsequent 2000 Biological Opinion on the Effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on Threatened and Endangered Species (FCRPS BO) remains valid.

The 1999 BA states, "the typical maximum range for reservoir elevation is 2,051 to 2,062.5 feet...and typically achieves the lowest elevation between November 15 and 20. The earlier date has been established to enhance kokanee spawning. Levels are controlled within 1 foot after this date to protect the kokanee spawning areas. If the lake level increases in December, a new minimum level is established within 0.5 feet of this elevation". Relative to the FWPO, the BA states "January to March 31 operations allow for some reservoir fluctuation for power operations, but levels cannot decrease below the last established minimum water level in December." Additionally, the Corps' July 8, 2011 letter states that the FWPO will follow existing ramping rates and discharge criteria established in the Water Control Manual for the dam. Based on this information, the Service has determined that the FWPO is described in the 1999 BA.

Also, after reviewing the Service's FCRPS BO, we have determined that the analysis contained therein remains valid, with the following clarification specific to the FWPO.



Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) in Lake Pend Oreille are highly dependent on kokanee salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) as a forage base. The relationship and status of these species in Lake Pend Oreille as well as the effects of fluctuating lake levels are discussed in pages 26-29, 43-44, 82, and 88 of the FCRPS BO. Due to the fact that FWPO will occur after kokanee spawning in Lake Pend Oreille has ceased, and reservoir levels will be maintained at least 1 foot above the established minimum level during FWPO, no additional risk of mortality to kokanee eggs from desiccation is anticipated. Additionally, because FWPO will follow established ramping rates and discharge criteria, no additional risk of mortality to kokanee eggs from suffocation due to bank erosion is anticipated. For these reasons, effects to kokanee, and therefore bull trout, from the FWPO are expected to be insignificant.

The Service appreciates the opportunity to provide technical assistance on this matter. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Jason Flory of my staff at (509) 893-8003, or by email at Jason_flory@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Ben Conard
Field Supervisor

From: Jason_Flory@fws.gov
To: Laufle_Jeffrey_C.NWS; jwbarco@bpa.gov; BPA_Scott_Bettin; Pozarycki_Scott_V.NWS
Cc: Ben_Conard@fws.gov; Bryon_Holt@fws.gov
Subject: Clarification of USFWS letter on LPO FWPO
Date: Monday, July 25, 2011 10:40:44 AM

All,

This email is a clarification of the July 19, 2011, letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Northern Idaho Field Office, on flexible winter power operations (FWPO) on Lake Pend Oreille.

In the second to last paragraph of the letter, the sentence that states, "Due to the fact that FWPO will occur after kokanee spawning in Lake Pend Oreille has ceased, and reservoir levels will be maintained at least 1 foot above the established minimum level during FWPO, no additional risk of mortality to kokanee eggs from desiccation is anticipated", should read as follows:

"Due to the fact that FWPO will occur after kokanee spawning in Lake Pend Oreille has ceased, and reservoir levels will be maintained at or above the established minimum level during FWPO, no additional risk of mortality to kokanee eggs from desiccation is anticipated."

All other text in the letter remains unchanged.

If you have any further questions, please contact me. Thank you.

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