

United States Government

Department of Energy  
Bonneville Power Administration

# memorandum

DATE: June 29, 2006

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Watershed Management Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0265/SA-263)

TO: David Kaplow - KEWU-4  
Fish and Wildlife Project Manager

**Proposed Action:** Rehabilitate Lapwai Creek and Protect and Restore the Big Canyon Creek Watershed

**Project No:** BPA Project #1999-017-00 (Rehabilitate Lapwai Creek) and BPA Project #1999-016-00 (Protect and Restore the Big Canyon Creek Watershed)

**Watershed Management Techniques or Actions Addressed Under This Supplement Analysis (See App. A of the Watershed Management Program EIS):** 1.13 Culvert Removal/Replacement to Improve Fish Passage; 2.1 Maintain Healthy Riparian Plant Communities; 2.7 Avoid Exotic Species; 2.9 Mechanical Vegetation Removal; 6.10 Access: Fencing; 7.18 Road Closure.

**Location:** Lapwai Creek Watershed and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds, Nez Perce Reservation, Nez Perce County, Idaho, near Lewiston, Idaho in the Clearwater Subbasin of the Mountain Snake Province

**Proposed by:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resource Management-Watershed Division

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The proposed restoration activities within the Lapwai Creek Watershed and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds will assist in the recovery and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat. Project activities within the Lapwai Creek Watershed include fence construction and maintenance, road decommissioning, and weed control. Project activities within the Big Canyon Creek Watershed include fence maintenance and road decommissioning. These activities will improve the quality of riparian areas, thereby improving water quality.

Both BPA projects are being grouped into one Supplement Analysis (SA) because:

- The watershed restoration activities within both watersheds are similar,
- Activities in both projects are carried out by the staff of the Nez Perce Tribe using the same protocols, and
- All activities will take place within the boundaries of the 1863 Nez Perce Reservation.

Passive riparian restoration will be accomplished by constructing fences to exclude livestock from sensitive riparian areas. Areas to be fenced were chosen based on their physical condition, their potential influence on water quality within the watershed, and the effect they

could have on fish diversity and productivity, if undisturbed by livestock. Maintenance activities will be done on fences constructed in the past to exclude livestock. Crews will walk along fencelines and make repairs as needed.

Approximately five miles of road will be decommissioned in the Sweetwater Creek watershed, which is a major tributary to Lapwai Creek and approximately 2 miles in the Cold Springs Creek watershed, a major tributary to Big Canyon Creek. The road areas were selected from a transportation plan that identified roads that release sediment into waterways, contributing to riparian degradation. Decommissioning practices vary depending on the stability of the area, but generally culverts are removed, natural drainage patterns are restored, unstable fill and cut banks are reshaped in an attempt to mimic natural slopes, and disturbed areas are replanted with native species. Monitoring is done to ensure that the decommissioning was successful.

Weed control activities will remove non-native vegetation so that sensitive riparian areas can be replanted with native tree, shrub and grass species. Some weed species will be controlled using brushers, by digging or using weed eaters (mechanical control). Because mechanical control is not effective with Japanese knotweed, control of this species will be done using chemical methods. Plants will be directly injected with Aquamaster, an herbicide that has been approved for use in and around water bodies.

**Analysis:** Kent Werlin, biologist for the Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resource Management-Watershed Division completed the compliance checklists for both projects (attached and signed by Mr. Werlin on May 31, 2006). The projects meet the standards and guidelines for the Watershed Management Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

**Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Species and Critical Habitat:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) office in Idaho was contacted for information on species proposed for listing or listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) that could occur in the project area. A letter from the Idaho Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office (dated June 7, 2006, attached) states that critical habitat for steelhead, a listed threatened species occurs within the project area. Five listed species under USFWS jurisdiction may occur in the project area: gray wolf (experimental/non-essential population), bald eagle (threatened-wintering area), Canada lynx (threatened), bull trout (threatened), and Spaulding's catchfly (threatened). Four species under the NOAA Fisheries jurisdiction are known to occur in the project area: fall-run Chinook salmon (threatened), spring/summer Chinook salmon (threatened), sockeye salmon (endangered), and Snake River Basin steelhead (threatened). No species proposed for listing have the potential to occur in the project area. All of these species were included in prior species lists received from USFWS so effects to these species were considered during the planning process.

Nez Perce Tribal Wildlife Department biologists and Idaho Fish and Game Department staff reviewed the list of species and considered whether these species or their potential habitat could be affected by this project. Only listed aquatic species are known to occur in the project area.

The potential effect to each of the species on the USFWS list is discussed below. The only species that could be affected by this project are steelhead and spring/summer Chinook, which is addressed by consultation using the BPA Habitat Improvement Program Biological Opinion (HIP BO) process (HIP BO approval letter attached).

Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

Steelhead occur within the Lapwai and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds, and the potential exists to temporarily affect this species through the implementation of watershed rehabilitation activities. **The potential to affect steelhead is addressed by consultation using the BPA HIP BO.**

Spring/summer chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)

Spring Chinook have been found to occasionally venture into the lower reaches of the mainstem tributaries (Clint Chandler, Fisheries Biologist, Nez Perce Tribe). The potential exists to temporarily affect this species through the implementation of watershed rehabilitation activities. **The potential to affect spring/summer chinook is addressed by consultation using the BPA HIP BO.**

Fall chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)

Fall chinook salmon are present in the Clearwater River but seldom travel into the tributaries within the project area. **The implementation of watershed rehabilitation activities in the Lapwai and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds will have no effect on fall chinook salmon.**

Sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)

**Sockeye salmon do not occur in the Lapwai and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds, and thus watershed rehabilitation activities within these watersheds will have no effect on this species.**

Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*)

Bull trout are present in the Clearwater River but seldom travel into the tributaries within the project area. **The implementation of watershed rehabilitation activities in the Lapwai and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds will have no effect on bull trout.**

Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)

The Nez Perce Tribal Wildlife Department (Keith Lawrence, Director) and the Idaho Fish and Game (Jay Crenshaw, Wildlife Manager, Clearwater Region) were contacted to inquire about any recorded sighting or denning of the Canada lynx in the Lapwai or Big Canyon Creek Watersheds. Neither agency has any knowledge of recorded sightings or denning presently occurring in the watersheds. Furthermore, due to the state of development and current land use in the project area, no potential habitat currently exists for the Canada lynx within the project area. **It is concluded that these actions will have no effect on the Canada lynx since this species is not present in the action area.**

Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Bald eagles do live and winter along the Clearwater River, but they do not winter within the Lapwai and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds. They are only occasionally observed passing

through these watersheds. **It is concluded that the watershed rehabilitation actions associated with these projects will have no effect on the bald eagle since this species is not present in the action area.**

Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*)

The Spalding's catchfly has not been observed on any tribal property within the NPT Reservation (Marcie Carter, Wildlife Biologist, Nez Perce Tribe). Furthermore, due to the state of development, current land use, and soil disturbance in the project area, no potential habitat (i.e., pristine, north-facing, tall forb community) currently exists for Spalding's catchfly within the project area. **Due to the lack of potential habitat the watershed rehabilitation actions associated with these projects will have no effect on Spaulding's catchfly.**

Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*)

The Nez Perce Tribal Wildlife Department (Keith Lawrence, Director) and the Idaho Fish and Game (Jay Crenshaw, Wildlife Manager, Clearwater Region) were contacted to inquire about any recorded sighting or denning of the Grey Wolf in the Lapwai and Big Canyon Creek Watersheds. Neither agency has any knowledge of recorded sightings or denning presently occurring in the watershed. Furthermore, due to the state of development and current land use in the project area, no potential habitat currently exists for the gray wolf within the project area. **It is concluded that these actions will have no effect on the grey wolf since this species is not present in the action area.**

Yellow billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*)

The Yellow-billed cuckoo has not been sighted within the Nez Perce Reservation boundary, and the large old growth black cottonwood stands that are needed for cuckoo survival are no longer present on the reservation. **It is concluded that the actions will have no effect on the yellow-billed cuckoo since this species is not present in the action area.**

**Cultural Resources:** A cultural resources review of the proposed project sites is being completed by the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Resources Department, prior to implementing any ground disturbing activities. This review included a literature search and a field survey by a qualified Tribal cultural resource specialist. The cultural resources report will be submitted to the THPO, along with a determination of whether historic properties will be affected, for concurrence. If any cultural or historic resources are identified in the project area, they will be avoided or appropriate mitigation will be done, in conjunction with the THPO and the Tribe. If cultural deposits are found during the phase of the proposed project, or if the nature of the undertaking changes, a cultural resource specialist will be contacted immediately.

**Public involvement:** Contact with the public has taken place as part of the planning process for the proposed project. Fencing and road decommissioning will take place on Nez Perce Tribal lands. Tribal programs and the public were given an opportunity to comment on the project as part of the Tribal NEPA process. The Nez Perce Tribe Watershed Program holds periodic public meetings to inform landowners about the project and to solicit comments.

**Findings:** The project is generally consistent with the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, as well as BPA's Watershed Management Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0265) and ROD. This Supplement Analysis finds that: 1) implementing the proposed action will not result in any substantial changes to the Watershed Management Program that are relevant to environmental concerns; and 2) there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the Watershed Management Program or its impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Kimberly R. St Hilaire

Kimberly R. St.Hilaire

Environmental Protection Specialist - KEC-4

CONCUR:

/s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: June 29, 2006

Attachments:

NEPA Compliance Checklists

USFWS Species Letter, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office, June 7, 2006

Letter from Nez Perce Tribe documenting rationale for ESA effects determination, dated June 20, 2006

BPA HIP BO Approval letters

cc: (w/ attachments)

Mr. Kent Werlin, Habitat Biologist, Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resource Management-Watershed Division