



Department of Energy

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

ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

October 12, 2011

In reply refer to: KEC-4

To: Parties Interested in the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho's Native Fish Aquaculture Program

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzes the effects of expanding the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho's (Tribe) Native Fish Aquaculture Program located near Bonners Ferry, ID. The Tribe would manage the Native Fish Aquaculture Program; BPA would provide funding. This letter briefly explains what is being proposed, outlines BPA's environmental review process, and invites you to comment on the proposal.

Background - In 1991, BPA began funding the Tribe's efforts to artificially propagate white sturgeon in order to increase their abundance in the basin. In 2009, the Tribe received approval to develop a Master Plan for the expansion of their white sturgeon facility to be submitted to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (Council) Independent Science and Review Panel. The Kootenai River Native Fish Conservation Aquaculture Program Master Plan (Master Plan) was submitted in August 2009, which initiated the Council's three-step review process. This EA analyzes the effects of the Proposed Action as described in the Kootenai River Native Fish Conservation Aquaculture Program Master Plan (Master Plan) and the No Action Alternative required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

Proposal - The purpose of the project is to aid in the restoration and conservation of Kootenai River white sturgeon listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. The project would help prevent extinction of Kootenai River white sturgeon by preserving the genetic and life history trait diversity of the remaining natural population, restoring a healthy age class structure, and replacing failed natural recruitment until naturally-produced recruitment could be restored. By developing the new hatchery facility the Tribe hopes to double the current level of production for Kootenai River White Sturgeon. The project would also expand burbot production capabilities from an experimental research phase to population-level production. The production program is intended to re-establish a stable population in the lower Kootenai River.

In order to achieve their project goals the Tribe has proposed the construction of a new hatchery facility on property owned by the Tribe at the confluence of the Moyie and Kootenai Rivers, approximately eight miles upstream from Bonners Ferry, Idaho. The proposed location of the new hatchery facility is currently the site of the Twin Rivers Canyon Resort.

The EA will help BPA understand the potential impacts of the proposal. During this process, we will be soliciting comments from the public and working with the Tribe, as well as with other federal, state and local agencies, Tribes, landowners, and interest groups.

How to be Involved - To support the environmental review process, BPA is beginning the public scoping period to help ensure that all pertinent issues are addressed and potentially significant impacts are identified. We invite your participation in the scoping process and request your comments and suggestions on the proposed project. The comment period begins October 14, 2011 and will end November 14, 2011. The link below will take you to a BPA web page that offers additional information

regarding BPA environmental review process for this project. On this web page you will find instructions on how to provide scoping comments, background information on the Tribe's proposed project, and a map showing the location of the proposed hatchery expansion sites.

www.bpa.gov/go/kooteniaiaquaculture

Comments can also be faxed to (503) 230-4019. Please refer to "Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Native Fish Aquaculture Program" in your comments and submit them by November 14, 2011. All comments will be posted on BPA's web site at www.bpa.gov/comment. If you have other questions or comments do not hesitate to call BPA toll free at (800) 622-4519.

Process and Schedule - The EA will help BPA understand the potential impacts of the proposal. During this process, we will be soliciting comments from the public and working with the Tribe, as well as with other federal, state and local agencies, Tribes, landowners, and interest groups. The environmental review process will take approximately eight months. A decision on whether and how to proceed is expected by spring 2012.

BPA will produce a Preliminary EA that will be available for review and comment. If you would like to receive a copy of the Preliminary EA, please indicate on the enclosed reply card whether you would like to receive it by regular, electronic mail or compact disc. If you would like to be taken off the project mailing list, please mark the box on the reply card. If you do not return the reply card, you will still receive notice when the Preliminary EA is available.

If you have questions regarding the environmental process, please contact the environmental project lead, Ted Gresh; at (800) 282-3713, or (503) 230-5756; or by e-mail esgresh@bpa.gov. Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

/s/ Ted Gresh

Ted Gresh
Environmental Protection Specialist

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