



Department of Energy

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



U.S. Forest Service

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest
Methow Valley Ranger District
24 West Chewuch Road
Winthrop, WA 98862

April 12, 2013

In reply refer to: KEC-4, USFS File code: 2360

To: Parties Interested in the Eightmile Ranch Coho Acclimation Site Proposal

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the United States Forest Service, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, (Forest Service) are jointly preparing an environmental assessment for a project in the Methow Valley Ranger District. This letter briefly explains what is being proposed, outlines our environmental review process and schedule, and invites you to comment on the proposal.

Proposal

BPA is considering whether to fund the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation's (Yakama Nation) proposal to construct and operate an acclimation pond for coho salmon on the Eightmile Ranch, which is owned and operated by the Forest Service, approximately eight miles north of the town of Winthrop, Okanogan County, Washington. Please see the enclosed map. The Forest Service is considering whether to issue a Special Use Permit to the Yakama Nation for the construction and operation of the acclimation site. The Forest Service is also considering a project-specific amendment to Okanogan Forest Plan Standard and Guideline 9-4 that would allow for an intake to supply water to the acclimation site. The amendment would be necessary in order for the Forest Service to issue a special use permit.

The main feature of the site is an earthen pond approximately 1/3-acre in size. The pond would be excavated below the ground level and fenced. Locations being considered are at the south end of the Eightmile Ranch property east of the Westside Chewuch Road. Other components of the design include a surface water intake on the Chewuch River, buried surface and ground water supply pipelines, a buried discharge line back to the river, and a buried electrical power line to the pond.

The pond would be used to acclimate coho smolts for the Mid-Columbia Coho Restoration Program, funded in part by BPA and implemented by the Yakama Nation. The young coho would be held in the pond from March to May and then released into the Chewuch River approximately 10 miles above its confluence with the Methow River. BPA's Mid-Columbia Coho Restoration Program Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (DOE/EIS-0425) (EIS) addressed the overall coho restoration program, with 11 acclimation sites in the Methow basin. Some of these sites proved not to be viable, so the Yakama Nation is proposing a new site at Eightmile Ranch. No additional coho would be produced or released for the program compared to the numbers presented in the EIS. The EIS that evaluates the overall program is available at BPA's web site,

http://www.efw.bpa.gov/environmental_services/Document_Library/Mid-Columbia_Coho_Restoration_Project/

To understand the potential environmental impacts of this proposal, BPA and the Forest Service will jointly prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) following the procedures of the National Environmental Policy Act. The EA will study two locations for the acclimation pond, as well as a no

action alternative under which the pond would not be built. The EA will describe anticipated impacts to natural and human resources and include mitigation measures that would help avoid or minimize impacts. During this process, BPA will work with landowners; federal, state and local agencies; interest groups; and tribes.

How to comment

Please send comments you may have on the proposal and its potential impacts by **May 13, 2013** so that your comments may be considered while we draft the EA. When commenting, refer to the Eightmile Ranch Coho Acclimation Site Project. Comments will be posted in their entirety on BPA's website at www.bpa.gov/comment. The Forest Service will also receive and review copies of all comments. Choose the way you would like to comment:

Mail: Bonneville Power Administration
Public Affairs – DKC-
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR 97293-4428

FAX: 503-230-4019
On-Line www.bpa.gov/comment
E-Mail: comment@bpa.gov
Call toll-free: 800-622-4519

Process and Schedule - The preliminary EA will be available for review and comment in the winter of 2013/14. Please indicate on the enclosed postcard whether you would like to receive the EA, and if so, whether by regular or electronic mail; or if you would like to be taken off the project mailing list. If you do not return the form, you will still receive notice when the preliminary EA is available.

BPA and the Forest Service plan to produce a final EA in mid-2014. Prior to deciding to proceed with the proposed project, each agency will need to prepare Finding of No Significant Impact, or if there is a potential for significant environmental impacts, the agencies would need to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. Should BPA and the Forest Service decide to build the acclimation site, construction might begin in fall of 2014.

For More Information - To find out more about the project please go to BPA's project web site at: www.bpa.gov/goto/Eightmile.

If you have questions regarding the project or the environmental process, please contact the BPA environmental compliance project lead, Nancy Weintraub, toll-free at 800-282-3713, directly at 503-230-5373 or e-mail nhweintraub@bpa.gov; or the Forest Service environmental coordinator, Victoria Wilkins, at 509-996-4063 or e-mail vewilkins@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

/s/ Nancy Weintraub
Nancy Weintraub
BPA Environmental Lead

/s/ Michael C. Liu
Michael C. Liu
Methow Valley District Ranger
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

Enclosures:
Project Map
Schematic Map
Comment Form and Return Envelope
Reply Postcard