



Department of Energy

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

ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

November 22, 2004

To: People Interested in the Kootenai River Ecosystems Project

This letter describes a proposal for increasing nutrient levels in the Kootenai River Ecosystem and invites your comments on the scope of the proposal and alternatives.

Proposal

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI) and Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) propose to add liquid nitrogen and phosphorus to the Kootenai River from late June through September each year starting in 2005. The liquid nutrients would be added through a gravity-fed steel pipe from holding tanks. The proposed location for adding the nutrients to the river is near the Montana/Idaho border. Researchers and river managers would regularly evaluate the effects of the nutrient additions to determine if the project should continue permanently. Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) would fund this project.

Background

The Kootenai River is currently nutrient poor and has been so for about 25 years. Low nutrient levels are, in part, responsible for the decline in fish populations in the river. Just as a farmer uses nutrients to grow crops, the river uses nutrients to grow algae, insects, and ultimately fish. Nutrients that once flowed downriver from Canada are now being trapped in the reservoir behind Libby Dam. The separation of the Kootenai River from its historic floodplain (downstream of Bonners Ferry, Idaho) also has resulted in fewer available nutrients for river productivity.

BPA would fund this proposal because BPA is responsible for protecting, mitigating and enhancing fish and wildlife affected by the development and operation of federal hydroelectric facilities on the Columbia River and its tributaries. As a federal agency, BPA must study the environmental impacts, both adverse and beneficial, of a proposed project before it can proceed.

Public Scoping Meeting - Open House

BPA is requesting your comments and suggestions to help us define the issues to cover in the environmental assessment being prepared. Staff from BPA, KTOI, and IDFG will provide information about the proposed project and be available to answer questions between 4-8 p.m., Monday, December 13, 2004, at an open house. Participants may also submit written comments during the meeting.

Public Scoping Meeting Open House
Monday, December 13, 4-8 p.m.
Boundary County Extension Office Conference Room
6447 Kootenai Street
Bonners Ferry, Idaho

How to Comment

BPA invites comments and suggestions on the proposed action and the scope of the environmental review. Comments for this project will be accepted through **January 28, 2005**. When sending in comments please refer to the project title: *Kootenai River Ecosystems*.

There are a number of ways for you to comment on the project. You can mail the enclosed comment form or a letter to BPA, Communications – DM-7, P.O. Box 14428, Portland, OR 97293-4428; or FAX to 503-230-3285, or submit your comment online at: www.bpa.gov/comment/.

Project Schedule

We plan to have a preliminary environmental review document ready for public review in spring 2005.

For More Information

In the meantime, if you have questions please call me toll-free at 1-800-282-3713 or at my direct number 503-230-5756, or send me an e-mail at caspiering@bpa.gov. Enclosed is a *Question and Answer Fact Sheet* that includes additional information about this project. Also, this information is available on the BPA Web site: <http://www.efw.bpa.gov/cgi-bin/PSA/NEPA/Projects>. Click on the link to the Kootenai River Ecosystems Project.

Thank you for your interest.

/s/ Colleen Spiering

Colleen Spiering
Environmental Project Manager

Enclosures:
Question and Answer Sheet
Public Comment Form
Return Post Card