

United States Government

Department of Energy  
Bonneville Power Administration

# memorandum

DATE: November 18, 2009

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Program Environmental Impact Statement, Release of Spring Chinook Juveniles into the Clearwater River (DOE/EIS-0213-SA-02)

TO: Jonathan McCloud  
Project Manager - KEWM-4

**Proposed Action:** Release an additional 200,000 spring Chinook juveniles into the Clearwater River from the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery

**Project No.:** 1983-350-00

**Location:** Near Lapwai in Nez Perce County, Idaho

**Proposed by:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT)

**Introduction:** The Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (NPTH EIS) (DOE/EIS-0213, July 1997) analyzed the impacts of constructing incubation, rearing, and satellite facilities and undertaking a fish production program for spring and fall Chinook salmon in the Clearwater River Basin. The purpose of this supplement analysis is to determine if a supplemental EIS is needed to address the impacts of releasing an additional 200,000 spring Chinook juveniles under this program.

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The NPT proposes to release an additional 200,000 spring Chinook smolts into the Clearwater River from the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery (NPTH) in April of each year until a permanent weir can be constructed on Meadow Creek to provide adult broodstock for the Meadow Creek program. The returning adult fish from the 200,000 smolt release would provide a surrogate broodstock for the Meadow Creek production of 400,000 parr that was addressed in the NPTH EIS. The NPT were not able to trap an adequate number of adults with a temporary weir on Meadow Creek as originally proposed in the EIS, and have not been able to secure funding to build a high-quality permanent weir. They have reached an agreement with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to rear and release the 200,000 smolts from the NPTH in order to build a broodstock from fish returning to the hatchery. The fish would be spawned, incubated, and early reared at the Clearwater Hatchery, then transported to NPTH in September, reared through the winter, and released directly into the Clearwater River the following April. BPA would fund the final rearing and release of the fish from the NPTH, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service would fund the spawning, incubation, and early rearing at Clearwater Hatchery through the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan. No additional facilities would be required for this program. The proposed releases of spring Chinook from the program, including the additional 200,000 smolt direct release, would total 825,000 fish, or 57,000 fish over the 768,000 proposed in the NPTH EIS. Assuming returning adults from the Meadow Creek releases return primarily to Meadow Creek, the 200,000 smolt release from Clearwater Hatchery would be required indefinitely. Construction of a high-quality weir capable of withstanding spring runoff, severe weather, and other challenges would be necessary in order to cancel the direct smolt releases.

**Analysis:**

- There would be no construction impacts from this proposal, and therefore no effects to terrestrial environmental resources.
- Impacts from interactions with other fish would be minimal. The total spring Chinook releases into the Clearwater subbasin would be only about 7.5% higher than the numbers originally analyzed in the EIS. Since the release would be to the mainstem Clearwater River, the habitat is not limited as it would be in the smaller tributaries where the releases were originally proposed and analyzed. Also, smolt releases have minimal impacts on natural rearing fish because the smolts migrate downstream to the ocean very quickly.
- The releases would have no additional effects on species listed under the Endangered Species Act beyond those addressed in the consultations on the original project. The releases will be addressed in the Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans under preparation for submittal to the National Marine Fisheries Service in January 2010.

**Findings:** As documented in this Supplement Analysis, the potential impacts from the additional releases of spring Chinook smolts from the NPTH have been examined, reviewed and consulted upon and are not substantially different from those discussed in the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0213), Record of Decision, and initial Supplement Analysis (SA-01). No additional impacts would occur in connection with this activity. There are no new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts. Therefore, a supplement to the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Program EIS is not needed.

/s/ Nancy H. Weintraub

Nancy H. Weintraub

Senior Environmental Protection Specialist – KEC-4

CONCUR:

/s/ Katherine S Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: November 18, 2009

cc:

Ms. Becky Johnson, Deputy Director of the Production Division, Nez Perce Tribe

Mr. Steve Rodgers, Production Supervisor III, Nez Perce Tribe