



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services

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June 19, 2002

Stacy L. Mason
Environmental Coordinator
Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

RE: McNary-John Day Transmission Line Project
DOE Reference: KEC-4
FWS Reference: 02-I-E0219

Dear Ms. Mason:

Thank you for your letter received on May 13, 2002, which included a Biological Assessment for the proposed McNary-John Day Transmission Line Project. The proposed action includes the construction of a new 500-kilovolt (kV) electrical transmission line along the Columbia River between the McNary Substation and the John Day Substation. The proposed transmission line would start at the McNary Substation in Umatilla County, Oregon, would cross the Columbia River between the McNary Dam and the Umatilla Bridge into Washington (Benton County), and would generally follow the Columbia River and State Route 14 through Benton and Klickitat Counties. At the John Day Dam, the proposed line would cross back into Oregon and connect into the John Day Substation near Rufus, Oregon (Sherman County).

The proposed line would parallel existing transmission lines in an existing corridor that runs between the McNary and John Day Substations. Most of the land crossed by the corridor is privately owned, with the remainder of the corridor crossing tribal, federal and state lands. The eastern half of the corridor predominantly crosses irrigated cropland, while the western half mainly crosses shrub-steppe grasslands, interspersed with pockets of irrigated and nonirrigated cropland. A total of 15 streams, including the Columbia river, cross the project corridor. Of these, 11 are considered fish bearing or potentially fish bearing.

Approximately 374 steel lattice towers, 145 to 165 feet tall, requiring an area of 2,500 square feet per tower would be placed along the corridor. The new line would require upgrades to approximately 40 miles of existing roads and the construction of several short spur roads to

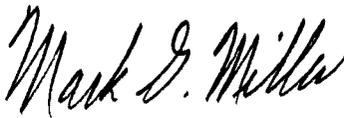
provide access to the towers. A number of temporary staging areas for equipment and supplies will also be required along the corridor during construction. A total of approximately 68 acres of habitat would be permanently impacted by installation of the new line.

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has concluded that this project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Ute ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*), Pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*), and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) concurs with the BPA determination that the proposed action may affect but is not likely to adversely affect bald eagle, Ute ladies' tresses, Pygmy rabbit, and bull trout. This concurrence is dependent upon BPA using best management practices when working near open water and wetlands along the project corridor and the implementation of all conservation measures outlined in the Biological Assessment.

This concludes informal consultation for species under the purview of the Service pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). This project should be re-analyzed if new information reveals effects of the action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not considered in this consultation; if the action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to the listed species or critical habitat that was not considered in this consultation; and/or, if a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated that may be affected by this project.

Your efforts to protect endangered species are appreciated. If you have further questions about this letter or your responsibilities under the Act, please contact Gregg Kurz at (509) 754-8580.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark G. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Supervisor