Chapter 1: Purpose of and Need for Action

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) must mitigate for wildlife habitat that was lost during development of the Federal Columbia River Power System; it does so by funding individual mitigation projects recommended by the Northwest Power Planning Council. At present, BPA addresses all mitigation project issues and impacts project by project. This approach is inefficient: we must readdress many common issues that arise repeatedly with each successive project. This approach does not foster consistency across projects, jurisdictions, and regions, or over time. BPA needs to find a way to ensure that consistency.

1.1 UNDERLYING NEED FOR ACTION

The network of rivers that feeds into the Pacific Northwest's Columbia River Basin has been altered by dams built to generate power, as well as to control flooding and to provide navigation, irrigation, and recreation services. Twenty-nine Federal hydroelectric dams and numerous other dams now regulate the flows of many of these rivers.

Development of this hydropower system has had far-reaching effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat. Many floodplains and riparian habitats important to wildlife were inundated when reservoirs filled behind dams. Streams have been channelized and roads and electrical facilities built. All these developments have acted to change or eliminate wildlife habitat. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is responsible for mitigating the loss of wildlife habitat caused by development of the Federal Columbia River Power System. (See Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act [Northwest Power Act], 16 U.S.C. 839 *et seq.*, Section 4.[h][10][A].)

Specific mitigation actions that BPA may support to satisfy this responsibility are generally developed in a public process managed by the Northwest Power Planning Council (Council). BPA is asked to implement projects included in the Council's annual Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program (Fish and Wildlife Program). Implementation covers a wide range of activities and a variety of potential implementors, each with different points of view and mandates. For instance, present and future BPA wildlife mitigation actions with potential environmental effects are expected to include the following:

- fee-title land acquisition and management;
- property lease and management;
- conservation easement acquisition and management;
- water rights acquisition and management;

- habitat restoration and improvement;
- installation of watering devices;
- riparian fencing; and
- similar wildlife conservation actions.

Potential project implementors and managers include Indian Tribes, state agencies, property owners, private conservation groups, and other Federal agencies. The range of actions and actors means that ensuring consistency from project to project is difficult. BPA needs to ensure that individual wildlife mitigation projects are planned and managed with appropriate consistency across projects, jurisdictions, and ecosystems, as well as over time.

1.2 PURPOSES

BPA intends to base its choices among alternatives on the following objectives:

- Achievement of the Fish and Wildlife Program's biological objectives for wildlife mitigation projects to be implemented by BPA;
- Achievement of cost and administrative efficiency;
- Compliance with all laws and regulations; and
- Environmental protection.

1.3 BACKGROUND

The Northwest Power Act recognized that development and operation of the Federal hydroelectric dams of the Columbia River and its tributaries have affected fish and wildlife resources. The Act created the Council, in part, to develop a program to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife, including related habitat, within the Columbia River Basin (section 4[h][1][A]).

With considerable public participation, the Council prepared its Fish and Wildlife Program[1], an outline of steps to achieve this mandate. The first Program was prepared in 1982; it has been amended from time to time with additional public participation. Related events include:

- State-prepared mitigation status reports for each Federal hydroelectric project.
- Wildlife loss assessments prepared by States and Tribes, using U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP).
- An independent scientific audit of the loss assessments (Council 1993).

[1] BPA is required to act in a manner consistent with the Program, the Council's Power Plan, and the purposes of the Act—including the purpose to ensure an adequate, efficient, economic and reliable power supply for the Pacific Northwest. BPA uses the Program to guide BPA's implementation of wildlife measures that mitigate for the power share of impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat caused by the Federal Columbia River Power System.

- Development of a wildlife mitigation project prioritization process managed by the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority through the Wildlife Working Group,[2] with the participation of the Yakama Indian Nation. This process includes independent scientific review and public comment opportunities.
- Development by the Wildlife Working Group of a draft Wildlife Plan (Council 1995) that describes procedures for (1) standardizing and completing the existing wildlife loss assessments, (2) developing and implementing mitigation plans that will fully mitigate for wildlife losses, and (3) monitoring and evaluating mitigation activities to ensure mitigation success. (The Wildlife Working Group intends to complete the Wildlife Plan after this environmental impact statement (EIS) process is completed.)
- Passage of section 512 of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 1997, 16 U.S.C. section 4(h)(10)(D), which requires the Council to appoint an Independent Scientific Review Panel and establish Scientific Peer Review Groups to advise the Council regarding priorities for recommending project funding by BPA. The Council must make the Panel's findings available to the public and subject to public comment.

The Council has incorporated the principle of adaptive management as part of its Fish and Wildlife Program: "In forging a program to address the needs of fish and wildlife in the Columbia Basin, the region faces the problem of resolving these facts: (1) prompt action must be taken to arrest the declines in many populations; and (2) the scientific basis for many actions is limited and often conflicting. This conflict is recognized in the (Northwest) Power Act. Congress directed the Council to use the best *available* scientific information and not to await scientific certainty prior to acting."

"Reflecting this charge, the Council has taken, and will continue to take, a number of significant actions on the basis of the available, and often limited, scientific information. The Council continues to recognize the need for prompt action despite scientific uncertainty. . . . The Council emphasizes the need to improve the scientific basis for the program and to *learn* from the implementation of the program." (Council 1995: 2-5)

According to the Council's current Program, "The goal of this [P]rogram's wildlife strategy is to achieve and sustain levels of habitat and species productivity as a means of fully mitigating

[2] The Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority is a regional association of Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife managers, including the Burns Paiute Tribe; Coeur d'Alene Tribe; Colville Confederated Tribes; Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation; Kootenai Tribe of Idaho; Kalispel Tribe; Nez Perce Tribe; Shoshone-Bannock Tribes; Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation; Spokane Tribe of Indians; Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Oregon Fish and Wildlife; Washington Department of Fisheries and Wildlife; the National Marine Fisheries Service; and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Wildlife Working Group consists of representatives from state and Federal fish, wildlife, and land management agencies; tribes; BPA; and utilities. Representatives from the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority, as well as from the U.S., Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. National Park Service comprise the Wildlife Working Group.

wildlife losses caused by construction and operation of the [F]ederal and non-[F]ederal hydroelectric system." Also, "For purposes of this [P]rogram, mitigation is defined as achieving and sustaining the levels of habitat and species productivity for the habitat units lost as a result of the construction and operation of the [F]ederal and non-[F]ederal hydropower system." (Council 1995: 11-2) The Program directs development of wildlife mitigation plans and projects consistent with the following principles:

- To select the least costly way to achieve the biological objective;
- To have measurable objectives, such as the restoration of a given number of habitat units;
- To protect high-quality native or other habitat or species of special concern (whether at the project site or not), including endangered, threatened, or sensitive species;
- To provide riparian or other habitat that can benefit both fish and wildlife;
- Where practical, to mitigate losses in-place, in-kind;
- To help protect or enhance natural ecosystems and species diversity over the long term;
- To complement the activities of the region's state and Federal wildlife agencies and Indian Tribes;
- To encourage the formation of those partnerships with other persons or entities that would reduce project costs, increase benefits, and/or eliminate duplicate activities;
- To address special wildlife losses in areas of historic salmon and steelhead runs that were eliminated by hydroelectric projects;
- To address concerns over additions to public land ownership and impacts on local communities, such as reduction or loss of local government tax or economic base, or consistency with local governments' comprehensive plans; and
- To use publicly owned land for mitigation or management agreements on private land (in preference to acquiring private land), while providing permanent protection or enhancement of wildlife habitat in the most cost-effective manner.
  (Council 1995: 11-3)

The current Program also identifies habitat type and target species mitigation priorities for the three Columbia River Basin subbasins, as shown in Table 1-1.

The Program and its amendments have included wildlife mitigation projects proposed by States, Tribes, Federal agencies, and others. Future Program amendments are expected to include additional projects for implementation. Where a mitigation project relates to power production, inclusion in the Council's Program represents a recommendation that BPA implement the project in accordance with the Northwest Power Act (section 4[h][10][A]). Wildlife mitigation projects proposed for BPA implementation in the past have varied considerably in scale and in detail. Typically, several project management issues have needed resolution prior to BPA implementation; this has been especially true of larger, more complex projects. Past wildlife mitigation projects have included the following:

Table 1-1:
Columbia River Basin Wildlife Mitigation Habitat Type and Target Species Priorities

Subbasin	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Lower Columbia	• Riparian/Riverine *Great blue heron* • Old Growth Forest *Northern Spotted Owl* Wetlands *Great blue heron* *Band-tailed pigeon* *Western pond turtle*	• Coniferous Forest *Ruffed grouse* *Elk* *American black bear* *Cougar*	
Upper Columbia	• Riparian/Riverine *Bald eagle (breeding)* *Black-capped chickadee* *Peregrine falcon* • Shrub-Steppe *Sharp-tailed grouse* *Pygmy rabbit* *Sage grouse* *Mule deer* Wetlands *Mallard* *Redhead*	• Islands *White pelican*	• Agricultural lands *Swainson's hawk* *Ring-necked pheasant*
Snake River	• Riparian/Riverine *Bald eagle (breeding)* *Bald eagle (wintering)* *River otter* *Black-capped chickadee* *Peregrine falcon* *Ruffed grouse* • Wetlands *Mallard*	• Native Grass and Shrubland *Mule deer* *Elk* *White-tailed deer* *Sharp-tailed grouse* • Coniferous Forest *Elk* Old Growth Forest *Pileated woodpecker*	• Lowland Forest *White-tailed deer*

Source: Council 1995: pp. 11-4, -5 and -6.

- **Sharp-Tailed Grouse and Pygmy Rabbit Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-0791, October 1992)**_ With the cooperation of the Washington Department of Wildlife, the project is preserving and improving about 11,736_hectares (ha) (29,000 acres(ac.)) of shrub-steppe and riparian habitat in Lincoln and Douglas Counties, Washington. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Grand Coulee Dam.

- **Pend Oreille Wetlands (Flying Goose Ranch) Wildlife Mitigation Project (Categorical Exclusion, December 1993)** With the cooperation of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, the project is preserving and improving 178 ha (440 ac.) of wetland habitat adjacent to the Kalispel Indian Reservation near Usk, Washington. The project

responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Albeni Falls Dam.

- **Blue Creek Winter Range Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-0939, December 1994)** With the cooperation of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, the project is preserving and improving 2185 ha (5400 ac.) of forest, shrub-steppe, and riparian habitat within the Spokane Indian Reservation. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Grand Coulee Dam.

- **Burlington Bottoms Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-0928, December 1994)** With the cooperation of the ODFW, the project is preserving and improving 169 ha (417 ac.) of wetland habitat adjacent to Sauvie Island near Portland, Oregon. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Federal hydroelectric projects in the Lower Columbia River and Willamette River Basins.

- **Hellsgate Winter Range Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-0940, March 1995)** With the cooperation of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the project is preserving and improving riparian, coniferous forest, and shrub-steppe wildlife habitat on several separate land parcels totaling 6,640 ha (16,409 ac.) within the boundaries of the Colville Indian Reservation in the state of Washington. The project specifically responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph Dams.

- **Willow Creek Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-1023, April 1995)** With the cooperation of The Nature Conservancy and the ODFW, the project is preserving and improving 142 ha (350 ac.) in Eugene, Oregon, maximizing wildlife and biodiversity values by emphasizing prairie, savanna, and forest habitat types. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Federal hydroelectric projects in the Willamette River Basin.

- **Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Enhancement Project (Categorical Exclusion, May 1995)** With the cooperation of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the project has improved 1086 ha (2683 ac.) of sharp-tailed grouse and mule deer habitat in Okanogan County, Washington. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Grand Coulee Dam.

- **Dworshak Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-1066, June 1995)** With the cooperation of the Nez Perce Tribe and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), the project is preserving and improving 24,420 ha (60,000 ac.) of forest and riparian habitat in the Craig Mountains of Idaho, another 53 ha (130 ac.) of old growth forest in the upper North Fork Clearwater River Basin, and about 4000 ha (10,000 acres) of riparian and white-tailed deer habitat in the lower Clearwater River drainage. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Dworshak Dam.

- **South Fork Snake River / Palisades Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-0956, September 1995)** With the cooperation of the IDFG, the project is preserving and improving riparian wildlife habitat along 89 kilometers (km) (61 miles(mi.)) of the South Fork Snake River, a portion of the Henry's Fork Snake River, and the mainstem Snake River upstream of Idaho Falls, Idaho. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of Palisades Dam and Reservoir on the South Fork Snake River.

- **Conforth Ranch (Wanaket) Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-1016, November 1995)** With the cooperation of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the project is preserving and improving 1140 ha (2817 ac.) of shrub-steppe, grassland, wetland, and riparian habitat near McNary, Oregon. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of McNary Dam.

- **Northeast Oregon Wildlife Mitigation Project (DOE/EA-1160, August 1996)** With the cooperation of the Nez Perce Tribe, the project is preserving and enhancing 6600 ha (16,500 ac.) of grassland, forest, and riparian habitat in the Grande Ronde River Basin. The project responds to wildlife habitat losses caused by the construction and operation of system-wide impacts of the FCRPS.

BPA agrees with the Council that "the region must work to improve its understanding of the interdependence among fish, wildlife and human activities, such as power system operations, harvest, water use and land management." (Council 1995: 1-13A)

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

1.4.1 Other BPA Wildlife Mitigation Program Environmental Analyses

Planning for several wildlife mitigation projects, and associated environmental review, has proceeded during preparation of this EIS. These projects are:

- Albeni Falls Wildlife Project (DOE/EA-1099) in northern Idaho; and
- Washington Wildlife Mitigation Projects (DOE/EA-1096), covering several projects in Washington.

BPA decisions regarding these projects are independent of this EIS and will not necessarily influence their outcome.

1.4.2 Vancouver Lowlands Wildlife Project EIS

In March 1996, BPA published a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS (NOI) on the Vancouver Lowlands Wildlife Project. The project involves the purchase and management of wildlife mitigation lands in Clark County, Washington. Scoping for the project EIS identified concern

that time taken to prepare the EIS might limit the opportunity to purchase available lands. BPA has agreed to discontinue preparation of the Vancouver Lowlands Wildlife Project EIS and fund purchase of the property, under two conditions:

1. That the project manager, WDFW, will keep the property in its status quo, not changing use of the property or undertaking large-scale management activities until completion of the Wildlife Mitigation Program EIS and Record of Decision; and
2. That WDFW prepare a project management plan consistent with the requirements of the alternative that BPA selects from this EIS.

Many issues raised in scoping the Vancouver Lowlands Wildlife Project EIS are addressed in the Wildlife Mitigation Program EIS; site-specific issues will be addressed in the Vancouver Lowlands Project Management Plan to be prepared by WDFW.

1.4.3 Columbia River System Operation Review (SOR) EIS

In December 1995, BPA, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), as joint lead agencies, published the SOR final EIS (DOE/EIS-0170). That EIS examined the impacts of various system operating strategies, including impacts on wildlife resources. Appendix N of the EIS focuses on wildlife and recommended mitigation measures that may be included in future Council Fish and Wildlife Program amendments.

1.4.4 BPA Watershed Management Program

In March 1996, BPA published a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS on the Watershed Management Program. As with the Wildlife Mitigation Program, BPA proposes to establish standards and guidelines for planning and implementing watershed conservation and rehabilitation projects throughout the Columbia River Basin. Although the underlying need of the Watershed Management Program is mitigation for the loss of fish habitat caused by the construction and operation of Federal hydroelectric projects in the Basin, many of the program's techniques are similar to those for wildlife mitigation. Therefore, much of the environmental impact analysis and potential standards and guidelines addressed in the Wildlife Mitigation Program EIS will also be included in the Watershed Management Program EIS. That EIS is scheduled for completion in mid-1997.

1.4.5 Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project EISs

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) are jointly proposing to develop and implement an ecosystem-based management strategy for lands they administer in the upper Columbia River Basin (UCRB). The agencies are preparing two EISs on land management strategies: the UCRB EIS addresses USFS- and BLM-administered lands in parts of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, and Utah; the Eastside EIS addresses agency lands in eastern Oregon and Washington. Because the geographic scope and many of the management issues are similar, BPA's Wildlife Mitigation Program EIS references several relevant studies prepared for these EISs.

1.5 DECISIONS TO BE MADE

Preparation of this document is intended to fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for BPA. Two decisions will be made from this document.

Bonneville Power Administration must decide:

- whether to adopt a set of management principles to guide all wildlife mitigation projects as selected by the Council, and
- if so, which set.

In the course of making these decisions, BPA will also be resolving the following issues:

1. Whether and to what extent BPA should prescribe conditions for funding types of wildlife mitigation actions.
2. Whether BPA should categorically eliminate any wildlife mitigation techniques from future funding consideration.
3. What role(s) might be most appropriate for public, Tribal, and agency participation in planning proposed wildlife mitigation projects.

If BPA were to adopt a set of governing principles, individual projects could be undertaken (once approved for funding) following a standardized process, allowing for greater consistency among projects as well as greater efficiency in project development and implementation. If BPA were *not* to adopt a set of principles (the No Action alternative), all details for each individual project would be developed on a case-by-case basis, including the process for development of a Project Management Plan. This case-by-case approach might result in a much broader range of project types and would require more administrative and analysis efforts because BPA would need repeatedly to address common issues for every project.

1.6 SCOPING

An NOI for the Wildlife Mitigation EIS was issued on June 12, 1995. Scoping meetings were held throughout BPA's service area with interested parties, including representatives of Native American Tribes and of local and county governments. Meeting sites included Flathead, Montana; Boise and Fort Hall, Idaho; Burns, Mission, Portland, Salem, and Warm Springs, Oregon; Owyhee, Nevada; and Olympia, Spokane, Toppenish, Moses Lake, and Grand Coulee, Washington. Over 50 people attended these meetings, and 6 letters were received on issues of concern for the project.

The following issues were identified during the scoping process:

- the EIS process itself, including the extent to which public involvement and local consultation and review would play a part,

- socioeconomic issues centering on land acquisition and multiple use opportunities and conflicts, as well as on potential local effects on the economy,
- cultural values and resource protection,
- Tribal rights,
- public access,
- project management (who, and by what means),
- resources management: water, vegetation, wetlands, wildlife; weeds/chemicals; fire management,
- issues related to public versus private land ownership, and
- government "taking" of private property.

In addition, many of these issues were identified in written and spoken comments presented at an April 9, 1996, open house for the proposed Vancouver Lowlands Wildlife Mitigation Project. Most of these issues are addressed in this Wildlife Mitigation Program EIS; more site-specific issues will be addressed in the Vancouver Lowlands Project Management Plan to be prepared by the WDFW.