

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: April 17, 2006

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Wildlife Mitigation Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0246/SA-51)

TO: Mr. John Baugher - KEWL-4
Fish and Wildlife Project Manager

Project Title: Preserve and Restore Columbia River Estuary - Crims Island Vegetation Control and Wildlife Monitoring

Project No: 2003-008-00

Watershed Management Techniques or Actions Addressed Under This Supplement Analysis (See Appendix A of the Watershed Management Program EIS): 7.1 Vegetation Management via Herbicides; 7.2 Vegetation Management via Mechanical Removal; 7.3 Vegetation Control via Biological Control 7.4 Vegetation Management via Hand Pulling

Location: Crims and Walker Islands, Near Clatskanie, Columbia County, OR

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Description of the Proposed Action: The goal of the overall project *Preserve and Restore Columbia River Estuary* was to acquire and restore approximately 600 acres of tidal emergent marsh, swamp, slough, and riparian forest habitat in the Columbia Estuary to benefit salmon, Columbian white-tailed deer and other wildlife. Since 2003, BPA, in cooperation with USFWS, Columbia Land Trust, US Geological Survey, Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District, US Corps of Engineers, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, helped acquire 473 acres on Crims Island and helped acquire a lease of about 110 acres of Walker Island.

Currently, BPA and USFWS, in cooperation with the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council, the Columbia Invasive Weed Control Partnership, and the North Coast Cooperative Weed Management Area, are proposing to fund activities to manage invasive weeds and monitor wildlife activities as a component of the planned restoration of Crims and Walker Islands.

Specific activities to be funded include the control of invasive plant presence in the vicinity of Crims and Walker Islands by implementing biological and mechanical control in accordance with the integrated pest management plan for Columbia County. Biocontrol insects, hand pulling and cutting will be employed to control invasive plant species such as purple loosestrife, reed grass, and Japanese knotweed. Additionally, the monitoring of waterbirds and Columbia white-tailed deer will help gauge the success of restoration activities.

Analysis: Crims and Walker Islands are part of the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbia White-tailed Deer, which in turn is part of the larger USFWS Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex. In June 2004, the Corps of Engineers completed Crims Island, Section 536 Habitat Restoration Project, Lower Columbia River and Estuary Final Implementation Document and Environmental Assessment (EA), and a subsequent Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Operation and maintenance activities, related to the restoration efforts, analyzed in the EA include biological control, mechanical control, hand cultivation, and herbicide treatment to control herbaceous weeds. Also included in the EA were post-construction monitoring efforts that would “measure the response of juvenile salmonids, intertidal marsh vegetation, and Columbian white-tailed deer to the Crims Island restoration activities.” Proposed wildlife monitoring activities will have no negative impacts.

USFWS submitted a Biological Assessment and initiated informal consultation with the USFWS in August 2005 for the use of herbicides to control purple loosestrife and the knotweed complex. USFWS concurred with the determination that the project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect Columbia white-tailed deer, bald eagle, bull trout, and bull trout proposed critical habitat. Terms and Conditions (Conservation Measures) to minimize or avoid adverse effects to these animals are outlined in the USFWS Sept. 9, 2005 letter of concurrence (see attached). BPA requires that all Conservation Measures must be adhered to.

USFWS submitted a Biological Assessment and initiated formal consultation with NOAA in September 2005 for the use of herbicides to control purple loosestrife and the knotweed complex. NOAA issued a BO in February 2006, stating that the proposed actions were not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the following thirteen species of ESA-listed salmonid fishes, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their designated critical habitats.

Listed fish:

Snake River (SR) fall-run Chinook salmon, SR spring/summer run Chinook salmon, SR sockeye salmon, Snake River Basin (SRB) steelhead, Lower Columbia River (LCR) Chinook salmon, Upper Columbia River (UCR) spring-run Chinook salmon, Upper Willamette River (UWR) spring-run Chinook salmon, Columbia River (CR) chum salmon, Middle Columbia River (MCR) steelhead, LCR steelhead, UWR steelhead, UCR steelhead, and LCR coho salmon.

Designated critical habitat:

SR fall-run Chinook salmon, SR sockeye salmon, SR spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, LCR Chinook salmon, UWR Chinook salmon, UCR spring-run Chinook salmon, CR chum salmon, UCR steelhead, SRB steelhead, MCR steelhead, LCR steelhead, and UWR steelhead.

Conservation Recommendations minimize or avoid adverse effects to the listed salmonid species and an Incidental Take Statement with Terms and Conditions are outlined in the BO (see attached). BPA requires that all Conservation Recommendations and Terms and Conditions must be adhered to.

No ground disturbing activities are included in the proposed activities of weed control and wildlife monitoring. Mechanical control of invasive weeds will include above-surface cutting. No impact to cultural resources is anticipated. However, in the unlikely event that

archaeological or culturally significant material is discovered during project implementation, work will immediately be halted in the vicinity of the findings until an archaeologist is contacted and an inspection and assessment are completed.

The US Corps of Engineers sent the draft EA out for public comment for 30 days and only two concerned public comments were received pertaining to geese and/or the depredation of local pasturelands. Otherwise, general support was expressed for the restoration and preservation of this wildlife habitat.

BPA's compliance checklist for this project was not necessary because the aforementioned documents (EA, FONSI, BO), provided by the USFWS, meet the standards and guidelines for the Watershed Management Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

Findings: The project is generally consistent with the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, as well as BPA's Wildlife Mitigation Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0246) and ROD. This Supplement Analysis finds that: 1) implementing the proposed action will not result in any substantial changes to the Wildlife Mitigation Program that are relevant to environmental concerns; and 2) there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the Wildlife Mitigation Program or its impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Kelly Mason

Kelly Mason

Environmental Specialist - KEC-4

CONCUR:

/s/ Kathy S. Pierce

Kathy S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer - KEC-4

DATE: April 18, 2006

Attachments:

USFWS ESA Section 7 Letter of Concurrence and Findings

NOAA ESA Section 7 Biological Opinion