

Idaho governor celebrates protection of land and endangered salmon

Leadore, Idaho – Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter applauded the efforts of federal and state agencies today in protecting more than 4,600 acres of fish and wildlife habitat in the upper Lemhi River Basin.

Representatives of the Idaho Office of Species Conservation, the Lemhi Regional Land Trust, Leadore Land Partners and the Bonneville Power Administration met in the community of Leadore, in the Salmon Basin, to celebrate a historic land conservation easement that safeguards more than half of the spawning habitat for endangered salmon and steelhead in the Lemhi basin.

Funded by the Bonneville Power Administration and the State of Idaho, the conservation easement, signed earlier this year, permanently conserves working ranch lands and protects 10 miles of in-stream riparian habitat along the mainstem of the Lemhi River and its tributaries.

“This historic agreement will help us move toward recovery and eventual delisting of chinook salmon in Idaho,” Otter said. “I know conservation easements are neither a cure-all nor the best solution in every circumstance. But this agreement works, and it further demonstrates that cattle ranching is compatible with the needs of native fish and wildlife.”

Under the conservation easement, the property owner retains title to his land and its traditional uses as a working ranch. However, the land’s sensitive habitat that endangered salmon and steelhead need is protected from activity that could degrade it. In addition, the Lemhi Regional Land Trust, in cooperation with the landowner, is developing a habitat management plan that safeguards and enhances existing fish and wildlife habitat.

BPA funding of the project is part of the 2008 Columbia Basin Fish Accords, which support mitigation for the Columbia and Snake river dams. The Idaho Accord was signed by the State of Idaho, BPA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation, providing \$41.3 million for the permanent protection of fish and wildlife habitat through land purchases and conservation easements, habitat restoration and water transactions in the Upper Lemhi, Lower Lemhi and Pahsimeroi rivers, as well as in the lower Clearwater and Potlatch watersheds. In addition, the agreement provides capital funding for expansion of facilities for the Snake River Sockeye Hatchery Program to meet requirements of the Federal Columbia River Power System biological opinion for Snake River sockeye, listed under the Endangered Species Act.

“The protection of this critical habitat for fish is great news for everyone who values the region’s iconic salmon runs,” said BPA Deputy Administrator Greg Delwiche. “The BPA funding of this conservation easement is a strategic investment of ratepayer funds that

will go a long way toward the rebuilding of our endangered stocks of salmon and steelhead.”

Conservation of habitat is just one component of a broader federal strategy to improve conditions for salmon and steelhead throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Photo caption (Riparian habitat on Tyler Ranch in Lemhi Basin of Idaho): This historic land conservation easement, funded by the Bonneville Power Administration and the State of Idaho, protects 10 miles of in-stream riparian habitat along the mainstem of the Lemhi River and its tributaries.

Photo caption (Landowner Karl Tyler and Gov. Butch Otter): Landowner Karl Tyler shows Idaho Gov. Butch Otter a portion of the 4,600 acres of newly protected fish and wildlife habitat.

About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Ore., is a nonprofit federal power marketer that sells wholesale electricity from 31 federal dams and one nuclear plant to 142 Northwest electric utilities, serving millions of consumers and businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and parts of California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. BPA delivers power via more than 15,000 circuit miles of lines and 259 substations to 490 transmission customers. In all, BPA markets about a third of the electricity consumed in the Northwest and operates three-quarters of the region’s high-voltage transmission grid. BPA also funds one of the largest fish and wildlife programs in the world, and, with its partners, pursues cost-effective energy savings and operational solutions that help maintain affordable, reliable and carbon-free electric power for the Northwest. www.bpa.gov

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