

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20426
October 31, 2006

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 1971-079
Hells Canyon Hydroelectric Project
Idaho Power Company

Harriet A. Hensley, Deputy Attorney General
Natural Resources Division
Office of the Attorney General, State of Idaho
700 W. Jefferson Street, Suite 210
Boise, Idaho 83720-0010

Willie Taylor, Director
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW – MS 2342 - MIB
Washington, D.C. 20240

Robert Lohn, Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115-0070

Ms. Colleen Fagan
Hydropower Coordinator, Northeast Region
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
107 20th Street
La Grande, OR 97850

Reference: Notification of Rescheduled Section 10(j) Meetings

Dear Addressee:

On July 25, 2006, we issued the draft environmental impact statement for the Hells Canyon Project. By letter August 2, 2006, we informed you of our determination that some of the agencies' recommended fish and wildlife measures, made pursuant to Section 10(j) of the Federal Power Act (FPA), may be

inconsistent with the public interest and comprehensive development standard of Sections 4(e) and 10(j) of the FPA or section 313(b) of the Federal Power Act.

In our August 2, 2006, letter, we indicated that we planned to conduct a meeting to help resolve some of the issues associated with the Hells Canyon Project relicensing. Consequently, we will hold a section 10(j) meeting from Tuesday, December 5 through Thursday, December 7, 2006, in Boise, Idaho, according to the enclosed agenda.¹ The meeting will be held at the Doubletree Hotel Boise Riverside, 2900 Chinden Blvd., starting at 8 am each day. We also plan to discuss issues related to the initiation of formal consultation under the Endangered Species Act.

If you have any questions, please contact Alan Mitchnick at (202)502-6074, alan.mitchnick@ferc.gov; or Allan Creamer at (502)502-8365, allan.creamer@ferc.gov.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Welch, Chief
Hydro West Branch 2

Enclosure: Meeting Agenda

cc: Service List
Public Files

¹ The meetings were originally scheduled for October 17-19, 2006, but were postponed at the request of the agencies until after close of the comment period for the draft environmental impact statement (November 3, 2006).

MEETING AGENDA

Section 10(j) and ESA Consultation Meeting
Hells Canyon Hydroelectric Project
December 5-7, 2006, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Doubletree Boise Riverside, Boise, Idaho

A. Introduction

- Introduction of Participants
- Meeting Procedures and Objectives

B. Discussion

Tuesday, December 5

Issues within the scope of Section 10(j)²

1. Monitor fall Chinook egg-to-fry survival every 5 years (NMFS, IDFG, ODFW) or at appropriate intervals (FWS) in the mainstem Snake River in the Swan Falls to Brownlee reach (NMFS, FWS, IDFG, ODFW) C.J. Strike to Bliss reach (NMFS, FWS), and Bliss to Swan Falls reach (NMFS). Monitoring studies to be initiated in 2015 (NMFS) or within 5 years of license issuance (IDFG, ODFW). [IDFG-9, Interior-47a, NMFS-14c, ODFW-16]
2. Begin passage and reintroduction studies of fall Chinook salmon in the Swan Falls reach (ODFW, FWS) or in the Snake River downstream of Bliss, C.J. Strike and Swan Falls dams (NMFS) within 15 years of license issuance (ODFW) or no later than 10 years prior to license expiration (NMFS). Study migration and survival of juvenile and adult fall Chinook salmon, potential locations for placing effective juvenile collection facilities, egg-to-fry survival of naturally-spawning fish and transportation survival. [Interior-47b, NMFS-16, ODFW-16]
3. Begin passage and reintroduction studies of spring Chinook salmon and summer steelhead and install smolt collection facilities at tributaries if warranted. Focus initial efforts on Pine Creek, with studies of migration to Eagle, Daly and Goose creeks to be

² Topics covered during each day of the meeting will be subject to modification based on progress during the previous day and mutual agreement by meeting participants.

initiated by 2012 (ODFW). Develop and implement a phased plan to restore passage to Pine, Indian, and Eagle Creeks and the Wildhorse River (FWS). Within 20 years, begin studies on three tributaries to be selected in consultation with agencies (NMFS). [Interior-46a&46c, NMFS-17, ODFW-14,15&40]

4. Install and maintain a downstream fish passage and collection facility at Hells Canyon dam within 10 years. [ODFW-12]
5. Develop and implement measures to restore and enhance Pacific lamprey. Develop, fund and implement habitat enhancement and lamprey monitoring, and develop an upstream and downstream passage plan mid-way through the license term (ODFW). Develop and implement a lamprey Management Plan including passage studies and measures (FWS). [Interior-56&57, ODFW-17&49]
6. Evaluate stocks of anadromous and resident fish for reintroduction (FWS, ODFW). [Interior-60, ODFW-22]
7. Develop and implement a long-term program and fish passage plan to achieve specified target population sizes of anadromous fish above the project and to reconnect resident fish populations. [ODFW-2&3]
8. Conduct steelhead and Chinook spawning surveys to assess spawning escapement, distribution and timing of spawning of restored populations. [ODFW-24]
9. Reintroduce anadromous salmon and steelhead to restore marine-derived nutrients (FWS). [Interior-41]
10. Develop and implement measures to address key limiting factors if passage and reintroduction efforts are terminated in a particular tributary or reach. [ODFW-20]
11. Release flows sufficient to ensure that the largest juvenile entrapment areas are reconnected with the mainstem river for at least 2 hours a day. If high water temperatures occur in entrapment pools, release a minimum of 11,500 cfs for the remainder of the rearing period. [NMFS-4]
12. Measure flows and ramping rates within 1 mile downstream of Hells Canyon dam (FWS, NMFS). [Interior-65, NMFS-15]

13. Monitor a series of modified operations including a 12-inch per hour ramp rate measures within one mile downstream of Hells Canyon dam, the same ramping rate with DO augmentation, and ROR operation with DO augmentation to determine effects on bull trout and other aquatic species (FWS). [Interior-44&66]
14. Implement a schedule of ramping rates ranging from no ramping up to ramping rate of 6 inches per hour, a seasonal minimum flow of 11,500 cfs and a seasonal maximum daily flow change of 10,000 cfs. [ODFW-33]
15. Shape BOR flow augmentation water by pre-releasing 100 kaf of storage from Brownlee reservoir from June 21 to August 21, attempt to hold Brownlee reservoir full through July 4, release up to 237 kaf by August 7, and consult with Corps to obtain a refill date of June 20 after the flood season. [ODFW-32].
16. Establish hatchery production goals based on adult returns and societal use (IDFG, FWS). [IDFG-4, Interior-48]

Section 7 consultation pertaining to anadromous fish

Discussion of issues associated with initiating formal consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

Wednesday, December 6Issues within the scope of Section 10(j)

17. Evaluate bioaccumulation of contaminants in white sturgeon (ODFW) and assess water quality impacts on early lifestages of white sturgeon (FWS, ODFW). [Interior-51, ODFW-42]
18. Monitor genotypic frequencies of white sturgeon (FWS, ODFW). [Interior-51, ODFW-42]
19. Determine which Idaho Power facilities need to have trash racks replaced to protect juvenile sturgeon from entrainment (FWS). [Interior-50b]
20. Translocate reproductive-size sturgeon into the Swan Falls to Brownlee reach if water quality is found to support reproduction (IDFG, ODFW, FWS). [IDFG-23, Interior-51, ODFW-42]
21. Seasonal ROR operation to protect sturgeon spawning and early lifestages below Hells Canyon dam (FWS). [Interior-54]
22. Develop and implement, if feasible, a fish passage plan for white sturgeon. [ODFW-19]
23. Update the white sturgeon conservation plan (FWS, ODFW), complete and implement a white sturgeon conservation action plan to coordinate measures associated with other Idaho Power projects (FWS). [Interior-51&52, ODFW-42]
24. Monitor water quality twice per month at numerous locations downstream of Hells Canyon dam (FWS). [Interior-67]
25. Vent turbines at Brownlee and Hells Canyon dams (FWS). [Interior-61]
26. Satisfy existing water quality standards in Oxbow and Hells Canyon reservoirs (FWS). [Interior-42]
27. Conduct biannual monitoring of benthic macrophytes, algae, and macroinvertebrates, monitor known colonies of Hells Canyon rapids snail and the short-faced limpet, and conduct intensive zonal distribution studies during the FWS-proposed ramping rate

study (agenda item #13) to evaluate effects of peak-loading operations on the benthic community (FWS). [Interior-70,71,72&73]

28. Establish and monitor experimental populations of Hells Canyon rapids snail, short-faced limpet, and western ridged mussel below Hells Canyon dam (FWS). [Interior-74&75]
29. Develop and implement an Oxbow bypassed reach conservation flow plan and DO augmentation to support primary production, native invertebrates, resident fish, to meet state water quality standards, and to meet life history requirements of bull trout (FWS). [Interior-43a,43b&63]

Thursday, December 7

Issues within the scope of Section 10(j)

30. Acquire and manage 41,747 acres (FWS) or 35,739 acres (ODFW) as mitigation for project effects on wildlife. [Interior-76, ODFW-61]
31. Acquire and manage 47,164 acres as mitigation for project effects on wildlife. [IDFG-29]
32. Fund habitat management on four state-owned islands. [IDFG-31, ODFW-62]
33. Develop and implement a Mountain Quail Management Plan (FWS). [Interior-80]
34. Develop and implement a plan to improve habitat conditions in the Pine Creek, Powder River, and Burnt River basins. [ODFW-38]
35. Monitor warmwater fish populations and conduct annual creel surveys in all project reservoirs. [ODFW-50]

Section 7 consultation pertaining to bull trout and terrestrial species

Discussion of issues associated with initiating formal consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

C. Summary of Meeting

- Issue resolution
- Follow-up actions