



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208-3621

ENVIRONMENT, FISH & WILDLIFE

December 29, 2017

In reply refer to: EC-4

To: Those interested in the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery and Steelhead Kelt Reconditioning

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to fund the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)¹ to implement a Snake River Steelhead Kelt Reconditioning Program that would expand an on-going research program to production levels for the capture, reconditioning, and release of post-spawn Snake River steelhead. BPA is also proposing to fund construction of a reconditioning facility within the Nez Perce Tribal Fish Hatchery (NPTH) near Lewiston, Idaho. BPA also proposes on-going funding to the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) for hatchery operations for the production of spring/summer and fall Chinook salmon at NPTH; and the replacement of four surface water pumps to serve the hatchery. This letter briefly explains what is being proposed and outlines the environmental review process and schedule.

Proposal: The Kelt Reconditioning Program would capitalize on the unique adaptation that steelhead have to spawn multiple times in their lifetime. The abundance of this life history pattern is currently lower than it was historically due to the difficulty with downstream passage of adult fish at mainstem hydropower facilities. Kelt reconditioning, as proposed here, consists of the capture of post-spawned steelhead and the administration of disease-preventative medications and feed for the purpose of improving survival over what would be expected in the wild. Upon release, these fish are expected to return again to their spawning areas, successfully spawn, and thereby increase spawner returns and productivity. This program would expand an on-going, and successful, research program to production levels. It also includes the construction of a kelt reconditioning facility at the NPTH.

This proposal also includes continued funding for ongoing production of 825,000 spring/summer Chinook and 1,400,000 fall Chinook salmon; and the replacement of two of the four surface water pumps supplying NPTH operations from the Clearwater River.

To understand the potential environmental impacts of this proposal, BPA will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) following the procedures of the National Environmental Policy Act. The EA will describe anticipated impacts on natural and human resources, as well as mitigation measures to help avoid or minimize impacts. During this process, BPA will work with landowners; tribes; federal, state and local agencies; and interest groups.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is a Cooperating Agency in the preparation of this EA, which will evaluate their proposal to authorize the kelt reconditioning program under Section 4(d), Tribal rule, of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

¹ The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission coordinates management policy and provides fisheries technical services for the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce tribes.

How to Comment: Please submit comments by **January 29, 2018**. Please indicate on the enclosed postcard whether and how you would like to receive the EA. All comments will be posted in their entirety on the project website at www.bpa.gov/goto/NezPerceHatchery and appear in the final EA. There are several ways that you can comment:

Mail:	Bonneville Power Administration Public Affairs – DKE-7 P.O. Box 14428 Portland, OR 97291-4428	Toll-free:	800-622-4519
		FAX:	503-230-4019
		Online:	www.bpa.gov/comment

Schedule:

The proposed schedule for the EA process is as follows:

Draft EA available for public comment	February 2018
Final EA	April 2018
Finding of No Significant Impact (if warranted)	April 2018
If decision to build, construction start	June 2018

For More Information:

If you have questions regarding the environmental process, please contact me at 503-230-3018, or by e-mail at cjhamel@bpa.gov, or Rob Shull, Contract Environmental Protection Specialist, First Tek Professional Staffing, at 503-230-3962, or by e-mail at rwshull@bpa.gov.

Thank you for your interest in our work.

Sincerely,

/s/ Chad J. Hamel

Chad J. Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Enclosures:
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