

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20426

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 2114-266 -- Washington
Priest Rapids Hydroelectric Project
Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant
County

September 11, 2015

Mr. Scott Carlon
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration
Northwest Regional Office
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97232

Mr. Jeff Krupka
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Central Washington Field Office
215 Melody Lane, Suite 103
Wenatchee, WA 98801

Subject: Request for concurrence under the Endangered Species Act

Dear Messrs.: Carlon and Krupka

On June 12, 2015, Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County (Grant County or licensee) filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) a draft biological assessment which describes the actions taken by Grant County at its Priest Rapids Project No. 2114 in response to the emergency drawdown of the Wanapum Reservoir, the biological effects of Grant County's response to the emergency drawdown on federally listed Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon, Upper Columbia River steelhead, and bull trout, and the implementation of Grant County's Interim Fish Passage Operations Plan (Interim Plan) approved by the Commission on March 26, 2014.¹

¹ Order Approving Interim Fish Passage Operations Plan (146 FERC ¶ 62,219).

On February 27, 2014, a 2 inch-wide, 65-foot-long horizontal fracture was discovered on a spillway pier at Wanapum Dam. An immediate drawdown of the Wanapum Reservoir commenced. The Wanapum development and the downstream Priest Rapids development comprise the Priest Rapids Project No. 2114.

On March 19, 2014, the Commission staff initiated emergency consultation under the Endangered Species Act with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and designated Grant County the Commission's non-federal representative for informal consultation.

Under the Interim Plan, Grant County modified the exits of the left and right bank fishways at Wanapum Dam. Weir boxes were installed near the exit of each fishway and supplied with flow via four electric pumps stationed at each ladder. The weir boxes used a false weir to attract fish from the fishway pools. Fish attracted from the pools swam past or jump the false weir and entered a flume which descended to the forebay close to the water surface near the existing fishway exit.

We have reviewed Grant County's draft Biological Assessment and we are adopting the draft BA without change as the Commission's BA. In summary, the BA concludes that Grant County's response to the Wanapum Dam emergency and the implementation of the Interim Plan, may have affected, but were not likely to have adversely affected Upper Columbia River ESU spring-run Chinook salmon, Upper Columbia River DPS steelhead, and Columbia River bull trout DPS.

The BA concludes that the emergency actions taken and the implementation of the Interim Plan did not destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat for Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon, Upper Columbia River steelhead, and bull trout. Similarly, the BA concludes that emergency actions taken and the implementation of the Interim Plan will not adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon.

A copy of Grant County's draft biological assessment (now considered to be our BA) can be accessed using this link;

<http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/common/opennat.asp?fileID=13902032>

Please file your concurrence with our not likely to adversely affect determinations on federally listed Upper Columbia River spring-run Chinook salmon, Upper Columbia River steelhead, and bull trout, as well as their critical habitat within 30 days from the date of this letter. The Commission strongly encourages electronic filing of your response using the Commission's eFiling system at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/efiling.asp>. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov, (866) 208-3676 (toll free), or (202) 502-8659 (TTY). In lieu of electronic filing, please send a paper copy to: Secretary, Federal Energy

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Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20426. The first page of any filing should include docket number P-2114-266.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions concerning this matter, contact Mark Pawlowski at (202) 502-6052.

Sincerely,

Steve Hocking, Chief
Environmental and Project Review Branch
Division of Hydropower Administration and
Compliance

cc: Mr. Steve Lewis
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Central Washington Field Office
215 Melody Lane, Suite 103
Wenatchee, WA 98801

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