



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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June 29, 2011

Ms. Kimberly D. Bose
Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
88 First Street N.E.
Washington D.C., 20426

Dear Ms. Bose:

SUBJECT: Response to comments submitted by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation on Wells Dam relicensing DEIS (Project No. 2149-152)

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT) filed comments with FERC on May 31, 2011, concerning the April 6, 2011, draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) issued by FERC for the relicensing of the Wells Project. While the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) appreciates the general support of the CCT for recommendations in the DEIS, the Department has concerns with two interrelated parts of their response and wanted to take the opportunity to provide additional information for further consideration by FERC.

In their response to the DEIS, the CCT requested that FERC intercede in the implementation of the hatchery programs because of an inequity of access to summer Chinook and steelhead produced as mitigation for the inundation caused by the building of Wells Dam. The Department believes that the current production arrangement meets best available science.

The current summer Chinook hatchery programs align well with the standards set by the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) and reduce risks that hatchery production can pose on the naturally spawning populations in the region. As recently as last year, the relevant co-managers, including the CCT, reviewed, evaluated and aligned the upper Columbia River production through the development of the Proceedings and Findings of the Summer/fall Chinook Salmon Summits (Peven Consulting, 2010). To change release locations or numbers could negate advancements made in aligning conservation objectives with artificial production obligations.

A formal collaborative management framework exists between the relevant co-managers in the region to address necessary changes in production including rearing location and release sites. The Habitat Conservation Plan (Wells HCP) was signed by federal, state, local, and tribal entities, including the CCT, in 2002. The Wells HCP, approved by FERC in 2004, included the inundation compensation hatchery programs referenced by the CCT in their May 31 letter. The Wells HCP also established a 'Hatchery Committee' that is identified as the approved forum for all decisions related to all hatchery programs described in the Wells HCP. Wells HCP Hatchery Committee decisions are consensus-based, and the CCT has been a willing and active participant in the Hatchery Committee.

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In addition to the cooperative relationships developed through the Wells HCP and the Summer/fall Chinook Salmon Summits, the Department has worked directly with the CCT concerning harvest access and sharing of the Columbia River salmon and steelhead runs that originate in the upper Columbia River region. Notable in this regard is the Agreement Between the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on Jointly Managed Salmon and Steelhead Populations (April 2007). This Agreement in part assures a fair and equitable harvest on salmon and steelhead originating from the boundary waters of the CCT reservation. The Department has also supported and worked closely with the CCT in their endeavors to make the new Chief Joseph Hatchery and associated hatchery programs a reality.

The CCT has been and presumably will continue to be a valued party to FERC approved forums wherein implementation for mitigation production is decided by consensus. Additional actions affecting the implementation of mitigation production that are outside of the approved forums risks nearly a decade of strong relationship building and the successful negotiations among all the affected entities who have signed on to these forums. The Department prefers to continue to work through these forums and directly with the CCT to address the equitable sharing of hatchery production and believes the collaborative record to date reflects our commitment.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment. If you have additional questions or would like additional information, please contact Dennis Beich, Regional Director at (509) 754-4624, ext. 19.

Sincerely,



Philip Anderson
Director

cc: Joe Peone, Colville Confederated Tribes
Shane Bickford, Douglas County PUD

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