

Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS-0312)

Responsible Agency: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Title of Proposed Action: Fish and Wildlife Implementation Plan

States and Provinces Involved: Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and British Columbia

Abstract: Despite the efforts of BPA and other regional entities in the Pacific Northwest, some populations of fish and wildlife continue to decline. Reasons for the lack of success include the following: different groups have different values and priorities; there is no clear and agreed-upon scientific answer; and there are conflicting directives and jurisdictions. The absence of a comprehensive and coordinated planning approach has caused inefficiencies in both implementing and funding mitigation and recovery efforts. With respect to the Federal Columbia River Power System, BPA funds a large share of the regional efforts. BPA needs a comprehensive and consistent policy to guide the implementation and funding of its fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery efforts.

BPA reviewed the many ongoing processes, identified key issues, and developed alternative policy directions based on alternatives developed by multiple existing initiatives in the Region. BPA examined five basic but distinctively different Policy Directions (Natural Focus, Weak Stock Focus, Sustainable Use Focus, Strong Stock Focus, and Commerce Focus) that offer a wide range of possible unified regional planning approaches. These alternatives are compared against continuing the Status Quo, a baseline or "no action," approach. In this final environmental impact statement (FEIS), with the benefit of public comment and participation, BPA has developed and proposes a Preferred Alternative (PA 2002) that substantially combines elements of the Weak Stock and Sustainable Use alternatives and that falls within the established range of potential Policy Direction alternatives. This FEIS evaluates the environmental consequences of BPA's implementation and funding of sample actions that could emerge from any of the Policy Directions.

BPA is working hard, through its implementation of the National Marine Fisheries Service's and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinions, and the Pacific Northwest Power Planning Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program, to complete a unified fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery policy. However, the timing and ultimate success of that effort is uncertain. In any event, BPA is obligated to fund and implement fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery actions before, during, and after these policy-level deliberations. BPA also has a statutory obligation to understand the environmental consequences of its actions and to provide an opportunity for the public to participate in agency decisionmaking. This FEIS is designed to meet the immediate and future needs of agency decisionmakers and the public for information regarding the impacts of mitigation and recovery actions proposed for implementation by BPA. BPA does not intend to unilaterally select a Policy Direction for the Region. However, if the Region fails to agree upon a Policy Direction, BPA must still implement and fund a fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery strategy. The BPA Administrator's initial decision, as well as future tiered decisions, will rely on this FEIS environmental analysis and its comparison of the alternatives against the purposes for action. The decisions will consider BPA's fish and wildlife responsibilities, as well as the agency's business responsibilities as a Federal Power Marketing Agency and its responsibility to provide public benefits to the Region.

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You may access the FEIS, or find out more information about BPA, on our web site at www.efw.bpa.gov

For information on DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) activities contact: Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance, EH-42, US Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Ave. SW, Washington DC, 20585. Phone: 1-800-472-2756, or visit the DOE NEPA Web at www.eh.doe.gov/nepa.