

019-01

As stated in the Draft EIS (Section 2.3), Section 1.8 of the Final EIS, and the NEOH Master Plan (Ashe et al. 2000), several other potential sites in the Imnaha and Grande Ronde Subbasins were evaluated, but dropped from further consideration due to a variety of reasons, including inadequate water supply or quality, lack of available space, inadequate power supply, and/or unavailability for acquisition. One suitable site was identified on the Lostine River, downstream of the proposed Lostine River Hatchery site. This site, at the Strathearn Ranch (Grande Ronde Subbasin site 22, Draft EIS, Table 1-1), met the project requirements, but the owner ultimately decided not to make the property available. Project team members also investigated, and eliminated from further consideration, possible sites on the west side of the Lostine River. The one feasible west-side site was identified, but dropped from further consideration because it would require substantially more site development (road improvements, bridge replacement, a powerline across the river, and extensive site clearing and grading); have a potentially greater impact to adjacent landowners (immediately adjacent to one residence and requiring several other residents to drive through hatchery facilities to access their property); and result in more disruption and potential impact to the natural environment (McMillen 2003, personal communication).

Sections 3.2 through 3.17 of the Draft EIS describe the anticipated impacts to the natural and built environment as a result of the proposed project, including construction, operation, and cumulative effects of traffic (Section 3.10) and noise (Section 3.13). Section 3.10.3 of the Draft EIS, as revised for the Final EIS, includes a discussion of the potential traffic impacts on nearby roads and residents. Traffic would increase at all sites temporarily during construction. At the Lostine River Hatchery, long-term impacts to traffic would be associated with the on-site residences, local employees, supply trips, and fish transport trips. For about 3 weeks in January, five to eight additional round-trips per day would be made by temporary workers employed at the hatchery (Zollman 2003, personnel communication). The number of trips to and from the hatchery and associated impacts on neighbors would be about the same whether the hatchery was located on the proposed site or across the river.

Although the proposed Lostine River Hatchery has the greatest potential to affect local residents given its proximity to homes and the current undeveloped nature of the site, it is the intent of hatchery co-managers to be good neighbors within the community. Therefore, the proposed project includes use of best management practices, activities, and other measures to avoid prolonged incidents of loud or excessive noise during construction and operation. During construction, noise-generating activities would be controlled by limiting the hours of construction. Measures to avoid loud or excessive noise during facility operations would include enclosing pumps and generators within buildings, and locating new facilities as far away as feasible from nearby residences.



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File Code: 2350

Date: August 26, 2003

Ms. Therese B. Lamb
Acting Vice-President for Environment, Fish, Wildlife
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208-3621

Dear Ms. Lamb:

Enclosed is my determination under Section 7(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) for the Northeast Oregon Hatchery Project. My review is based on the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement Prepared for the Northeast Oregon Hatchery Project Grande Ronde Spring Chinook Project* (NEOH DEIS), May 2003. My determination presumes that water rights are secured for the Imnaha and other facilities. The WSRA Section 7 determination is preliminary, based on the information in the NEOH DEIS. I will make a final determination in response to the NEOH Final Environmental Impact Statement (NEOH FEIS).

Following the NEOH FEIS, the Forest Supervisor of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will make a separate decision on whether to issue a special use permit for the Imnaha Satellite Facility modifications, which are located on National Forest lands.

I evaluated proposed project facilities in the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River (WSR) as to whether their construction and/or operation resulted in "direct and adverse effects" on the river's free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values, as directed by the language of Section 7(a) of the WSRA. I considered the effects of proposed project facilities below the Lostine WSR and on Lookingglass Creek (tributary to Grande Ronde WSR) as to their effects within the designated river corridors and specific to scenery, recreation, fish or wildlife values, also as directed by language in Section 7(a) of the WSRA. I will not summarize my determination in this cover letter, but do want to draw attention to two significant concerns identified in my determination.

Based on information in the NEOH DEIS, my principal concern is the Imnaha Final Rearing Facility's effects to the river's free-flowing condition due to proposed in-channel structures and to in-channel effects resulting from floodplain protection fill. It is my preliminary finding that the free-flowing condition of the Imnaha WSR would be directly and adversely affected by the Imnaha Final Rearing Facility as proposed. The WSRA protection of free-flow is a fundamental protection afforded by the statute. New construction such as the Imnaha Final Rearing Facility in the floodplain of the river will be difficult to reconcile with protection of the Imnaha WSR's free-flow. Construction and water diversion from a new facility will also create entirely new impacts to in-stream and riparian fish habitat, and the new facility will increase transport and handling stress on juvenile fish. Although it may be possible to alter the facilities design and operation to avoid adverse effects, I also ask that you reconsider the need for this part of the NEOH proposal.

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020-02



Ms. Therese B. Lamb

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I am unable to make a finding regarding the effect of the proposed action on fish and fish habitat for the Imnaha and Lostine WSR's as part of my preliminary determination. This is because the NEOH DEIS provides insufficient information and analysis to complete my analysis of effects to fish and fish habitat. I also anticipate that the recent recommendations (June 2003) of the Independent Science Advisory Board will be incorporated into design and operation of the proposed facilities, and will be reflected in the NEOH FEIS. The specific additional information and analysis needed for my determination are summarized in my determination and are discussed in detail in the enclosed *Wild and Scenic Rivers Act Section 7(a) Report, NEOH DEIS*. The *Wild and Scenic Rivers Act Section 7(a) Report, NEOH DEIS*, also identifies other concerns and suggested mitigations to better protect the outstandingly remarkable values of the Imnaha WSR. Please consider this report as the Forest Service comment on the NEOH DEIS.

020-03

I appreciate your extension of time for my review of the NEOH DEIS. The NEOH DEIS goals for restoration of natural production of spring Chinook are also goals for stewardship of these WSR's. I am committed to efforts to restore natural production of spring Chinook in a manner that protects this species, nontarget fish species, other WSR-related values, and values of surrounding National Forest System lands. I look forward to collaboration with BPA, other Federal and state agencies, and the Nez Perce Tribe on these shared goals.

020-04

Sincerely,

/s/
LINDA GOODMAN
Regional Forester

Enclosures

cc: Dave Johnson, Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries, P.O. Box 365, Lapwai, ID 83540; Ken Kirkman, Fish and Wildlife Project Manager, Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, OR 97208; Mickey Carter, Environmental Protection Specialist, Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 3621, Mail Stop KEC-4, Portland, OR 97208; Gary Miller and Randy Tweton, USFWS, 3502 Hwy 30, La Grande OR 97805; Phil Howell, USFS PNW Research Station, 1401 Gekeler Land, LaGrande, OR 97850; David Heller, Jeff Uebel, Susan Sater; Tom Glassford, Kendall Clark, Forest Supervisor, WAW NF; Jocelyn Somers, USDA Office of the General Council, 1220 SW 3rd Avenue, Room 1734, Portland, OR 97204

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
Section 7(a) Report
Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Prepared for the Northeast Oregon Hatchery Project
Grande Ronde Spring Chinook Project
August 26, 2003

This Section 7(a) report provides the basis for evaluation of the Northeast Oregon Hatchery project proposals within the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River (WSR) corridor under the “direct and adverse effects” standard and, for the portions of the project located proximate to the Lostine and Grande Ronde WSRs, under the “invade the area or unreasonably diminish” standard. It is presented in three parts:

- Projects Within the Imnaha WSR Corridor
- Projects Below the Lostine WSR
- Project Above the Grande Ronde WSR

The report is based on the description of the effects in the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement Prepared for the Northeast Oregon Hatchery Project Grande Ronde Spring Chinook Project* (NEOH DEIS) and Forest Service staff knowledge. The majority of the discussion relies on evaluation in the NEOH DEIS. Additional evaluation is provided by Forest Service specialists, based on local knowledge and other sources of information as parenthetically referenced.

020-05