



November 15, 2005

To each member of ID, MT, OR, WA congressional delegations (see attached list):

The Members of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA) consider the Fish Passage Center (FPC) an essential technical resource. Critical services the FPC provides to the region's state, federal and tribal fish and wildlife managers are data collection, management, summarization, and analyses, as they relate to hydropower system operations, fish passage, fish passage management and water management. These services are essential to the fish and wildlife managers because they provide accurate, reliable and complete information necessary for federal fish managers and state and tribal governments to meaningfully and effectively participate in regional decision making about hydropower system management. FPC staff, shared by the fish and wildlife managers, complements the limited technical staff of each. By sharing the expertise and experience of the FPC staff, fish and wildlife managers effectively coordinate and integrate data collection and analyses.

The FPC enjoys the trust and confidence of the region's fish and wildlife managers because it accurately and objectively collects and analyzes the data used by federal, state and tribal governments, and others. The staff reports to and is directly accountable to the region's fish and wildlife managers. The policies and procedures used by FPC staff to collect, manage and analyze data have undergone significant independent reviews, and have passed each with high marks for objectivity, integrity, completeness, transparency, and responsiveness to its constituents.

The suite of services and products provided by the FPC, as described in the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (NPCC) Fish and Wildlife Program, are not only used by the state, tribal and federal fish managers, but are also available to the public, and other regional entities in the Columbia Basin. In fact, it has been well documented that the data collection and analyses provided to the region by the FPC are unique and complementary to other data management programs, and are widely used. A few years ago, the NPCC asked its panel of independent scientists to review the data collection, management and analyses functions of the FPC and compare them to other regional programs to determine if there were any significant redundancies. In short, it concluded the FPC did not duplicate other regional programs and provided certain unique services and functions. Examples of important products provided by the FPC include:

- The Fish Passage Center Annual Report which summarizes juvenile fish passage, adult passage, river operations, and hatchery releases, and the Smolt Monitoring Program;
- The Comparative Survival Study, which annually summarizes smolt-to-adult return estimates by passage route and juvenile survival;
- The Adult Facilities Inspection Program Annual Report.

851 SW Sixth Avenue
Suite 260
Portland, Oregon 97204

Phone: 503.229.0191
Fax: 503.229.0443
www.cbfwa.org

COORDINATING AND PROMOTING EFFECTIVE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION
OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITAT IN THE COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN

The FPC has well served the region's fish and wildlife managers and others for the past 21 years and has done so in an efficient and cost effective manner, in part due to the long term experience and diverse abilities of the FPC staff. The CBFWA Members have worked with others in the region over the years to ensure the FPC is an efficient cohesive unit whose staff complements each other and the staffs of the fish and wildlife managers. Its data collection, management, summarization and analyses functions are integrally related to each other and to those of the fish and wildlife managers. As such, it is essential that the FPC remain intact as presently structured and retain its full suite of responsibilities. The highly efficient organizational and functional structure of the FPC should not be taken for granted, especially in these times of ever-tightening budgets.

In summary, the Fish Passage Center provides federal, state and tribal governments, and others, unique technical expertise and experience in the areas of fish passage, hydrology, hydropower system operations and data management. Several independent reviews have concluded that FPC staff collects, manages, and analyzes data accurately and objectively, and that its services and functions are not redundant to other regional data management programs. Finally, the FPC conducts its business in a publicly transparent and accountable way, answering directly to federal, state and tribal fish and wildlife managers, and to an Oversight Board that includes representatives of the power industry, environmental/fishing groups, and public at-large. Few other regional data management programs meet this standard.

The CBFWA Members are confident the FPC meets and exceeds the region's expectations for it as described in the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program. The NPCC concurred with this assessment and included funding for the FPC in its FY 2006 recommendations to the Bonneville Power Administration. The CBFWA Members are committed to working with others in the region to ensure the FPC continues to provide the region its current full suite of essential services necessary to inform regional decisions affecting Columbia Basin fish resources.

The NOAA Fisheries and U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service abstain from taking a position on this action.

Sincerely,



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Tony Nigro, Chair
Columbia Basin Fish & Wildlife Authority

cc: Melinda Eden, Chair
Northwest Power Conservation Council
Members
Columbia Basin Fish & Wildlife Authority