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# American Fisheries Society

## Western Division

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February 4, 2005

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians  
 1827 NE 44<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 130  
 Portland, OR 97213

Dear Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians,

I wanted to write to apprise you of the status of the Western Division's independent review of the 2000 Biological Opinion and the (2000 Federal Columbia River Hydropower System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion on remand."

We have contacted a large number of potential reviewers. At last count we had confirmations from five with the potential to add an additional five reviewers. We have contacted well-known scientists in Canada as well as the USA in an effort to obtain reviews from scientists knowledgeable about the issues related to hydropower, but without involvement within the Columbia Basin.

The Questions guiding our review follow:

1. Have the findings in the redrafted 2000 Biological Opinion (e.g., "no jeopardy" determination and Updated Proposed Action) significantly departed from the past scientific assessments and recommendations? If so, was there new or previously unexploited information used to support a departure from past findings?
2. Is acceptance of the federal hydropower system as part of the natural environment supported by science? Does sufficient technical capacity exist to differentiate between operation and existence of the FCRPS in a manner that fully documents all impacts to fish (lethal and non-lethal, including passage, water quality, predation, harassment, etc.)?
3. What are the limiting habitat factors for salmon and steelhead recovery in the Columbia and Snake Rivers? How does the FCRPS contribute to those limiting factors? What if anything does the updates action propose to alleviate those limiting factors? Are they adequate to stop decline?
4. Does the proposed action adequately "spread the risk" for unknown consequences of the Updated Proposed Action? Has the Updated Proposed Action appreciably reduced the commitment or obligation of the action agencies to protect and recover anadromous fish populations in the Columbia and Snake Rivers?

5. Is the Updated Proposed Action adequate to prevent further decline of listed fish in the Columbia and Snake Rivers under all environmental conditions? IS the recovery of listed fish populations possible, or understood, using the assumptions

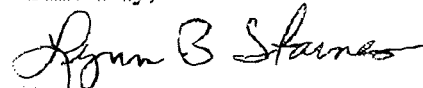
proposed in the referenced 2000 Biological Opinion and the Updated Proposed Action?

We anticipate completing this review by April 1. Let us know if this date changes. A number of potential reviewers felt that they could not perform an adequate review within this limited time. Let us know if more time becomes available. With the scope of this review, time is definitely a limiting factor.

Per the Western Division's practice, we normally provide our reviewers a small honorarium, if it is available from the requesting entity. This stipend would be paid to the Western Division of the American Fisheries Society who will distribute to the scientists upon completion of their report. If you have the resources, this should not exceed \$25,000. I give you this figure for planning purposes. The figure will be lower if we stay with five reviewers.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions or if we can provide additional information.

Sincerely,



Lynn B. Starnes,  
President, Western Division AFS  
(505)248-6620