



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Columbia River Gorge
National Scenic Area
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902 Wasco Avenue
Suite 200
Hood River, OR 97031

File Code: 1900

Date: March 15, 2002

Attention: Kendra Phillips
Northwest Power Planning Council
Response to ISRP
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204

Re: **Project 199902500**; ISRP Request for Additional Information

Dear Ms. Phillips:

I am providing the information requested in the March 4, 2002 *ISRP Preliminary Review of Fiscal Year 2003 Proposals for the Upper and Middle Snake, Columbia Cascade, and Lower Columbia and Estuary Provinces* for **Project 199902500**, Sandy River Delta Riparian Forest, Wetlands, and Anadromous Estuary Restoration.

Information Request

What is the current status of the fish populations in the old channel?

Response: Fish habitat is poor. Due to sixty years of siltation, the channel has become a seasonal slough. When the Columbia River levels are high (during the spring freshet), water readily flows through the old channel. Less frequently, the Sandy River flows through the channel. In the summer, water is retained only in a few pools.

ODFW and the Forest Service assessed summer fish use of the channel in the mid-1990's, via seining. An abundance of small fish were found (e.g. stickleback), and one (essentially trapped) juvenile salmonid. Because current habitat quality is so poor, restoration should have a measurable positive effect for fish habitat.

Information Request

A plan for monitoring fish utilization of the old channel following reconnection to the Columbia needs to be developed.

Response: The need for a monitoring plan for fish utilization of the old channel following dike removal is recognized. It would be developed



as part of the NEPA phase, and the projected NEPA costs include the development of a monitoring plan.

Information Request

The sponsors are asking for \$800,000 for dike removal and access, yet the NEPA documentation and consequently approval for removal of the dike has not been granted. What is the prospect that dike removal would be approved?

Response: The dike is on land owned by the State of Oregon and managed by the Oregon Division of State Lands (as submerged and submersible land). The State's ownership was recently settled as a result of the Sandy River navigability study. While the Forest Service has proposed dike removal, it was with the concurrence of the Oregon Division of State Lands (DSL), and DSL would now like to be considered a co-applicant/sponsor. The Forest Service assessment is such that it may be time consuming and somewhat costly to do the necessary NEPA work (ESA, SHPO, etc) but it can be accomplished and the necessary agency concurrences can be obtained. However, as ever, the social interest and effects are less predictable. DSL will ultimately decide whether or not to remove the dike, and on March 4, 2002 (in response to this ISRP request), Assistant DSL Director John Lilly indicated DSL finds it possible to allow dike removal.

Additional Information

We want to make it clear to the ISRP and BPA that the project can be considered in segments. If the ISRP has substantive concerns with dike removal, they can consider recommending funding only the wetland and riparian forest restoration components.

Please feel free to contact me at (541) 308-1720 or at vkelly@fs.fed.us if any further information is needed.

Sincerely,

Virginia Kelly

VIRGINIA KELLY
Planning Team Leader