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# ASOTIN Conservation District COUNTY

*Mission Statement:*

*"To advocate, educate and assist people in responsible land management and agricultural practices that conserve and improve air, soil and water quality and fish and wildlife habitat for present and future generations."*

To: Northwest Power and Conservation Council  
851 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave, Ste 1100  
Portland, Oregon 97204-1348

From: Asotin County Conservation District (ACCD)

Re: Request for Comments on Project 200205000

Date: July 14, 2006

200607035

To Whom It May Concern:

The intent of this letter is to provide responses, as requested, to the ISRP Comments of the FY07-09 Project Proposal 199401805 – *Continued Implementation of Prioritized Asotin Creek Watershed Habitat Projects*. We have been working with Council Staff and Bonneville Power Administration for the past 12 years on complex fish habitat issues throughout Asotin County, especially in the Asotin Creek watershed. We have reviewed the ISRP comments to our proposal. While there are no specific questions to answer, we will provide responses to the comments.

The comments discuss that implementation should not occur prior to an adequate watershed analysis. During the subbasin planning process, it was identified that factors limiting salmonids are similar between salmonid bearing streams in Asotin County. Rather than spending a significant amount of time and expense on planning and watershed analysis, the technical team has agreed that issues found in the Asotin Creek watershed are the same as those in Couse and Tenmile creek watersheds and that nothing would be identified that was not already documented in spawning ground surveys by WDFW. As stated in the project history section of our proposal, we have gained the trust and credibility of watershed landowners and the salmonid bearing streams outside of Asotin Creek are small in nature, only have roads in the lower few miles, and are almost exclusively privately owned with little historic or current timber harvest in the headwaters. That leaves riparian, upland crop and pastureland, and instream habitat as the areas on which to focus restoration efforts.

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Comment on ISRP Report 2006-4 Preliminary Review of Fiscal Year 07-09 Proposals for Columbia River Basin Fish & Wildlife Program (ISRP/Project/General Comment) -038

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The reviewer(s) commented that the strategies described are not likely to reduce embeddedness within the area to 10% and suggested that the stream's width, depth ratio, sinuosity, and connectivity to the floodplain be restored to enable the stream to re-work its gravels and sort them. We feel that the strategies identified under Objective Upper Asotin 1.1 will achieve this. These strategies include: improve function of riparian buffers; improve upland agricultural practices to reduce sediment delivery to streams; restore perennial vegetation in uplands which will replace annual cropping and be less intensive management; and improve streambank stability through riparian planting and fencing projects. By improving riparian function, the stream system will stabilize and the floodplain connectivity and sinuosity will be achieved. Reducing sediment delivered to the stream from the uplands will also help reduce fines in the stream and improve sorting of the gravels for better spawning habitat. We feel these strategies better meet the ISRP goals than instream restoration. Although identified in the Subbasin Plan, it was not addressed in this proposal due in large part to previous ISRP comments on instream habitat work and the ability to get permits to complete these types of projects. This will be addressed in the future, after we get upland and riparian conditions addressed.

Information on M&E is another item that the reviewer(s) felt was lacking in our application. There are no objectives, tasks or budget identified for M&E in this application. M&E will be conducted in these watersheds but will be conducted under "199401805 - Continued Implementation of Prioritized Asotin Creek Watershed Habitat Projects" and will include habitat utilization by spawning steelhead, collecting habitat and temperature information while doing spawning ground and juvenile density surveys.

We agree with the reviewers' assessments in the last four paragraphs. This proposal addresses wild steelhead in watersheds that have not had any historic hatchery releases. We believe by protecting and restoring these watersheds we will be improving the diversity of the summer steelhead population and the Major Spawning Aggregation (MSA).

We appreciate the positive comments on this proposal and look forward to working with Council staff and BPA to finalize this project for implementation.

Sincerely,



Megan Stewart  
District Office Manger



Cheryl Sonnen  
Resource Technician