

**W. Bill Booth**  
Chair  
Idaho

**James A. Yost**  
Idaho

**Tom Karier**  
Washington

**Dick Wallace**  
Washington



**Bruce A. Measure**  
Vice-Chair  
Montana

**Rhonda Whiting**  
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**Melinda S. Eden**  
Oregon

**Joan M. Dukes**  
Oregon

October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009

## **DECISION MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Council members

**FROM:** Lynn Palensky

**SUBJECT:** Council decision on initiating Fish and Wildlife Program amendment process to consider adding the proposed subbasin plans for the Bitterroot and Blackfoot subbasins

Staff asks that the Council approve the attached letter for signature. The Council proposes to amend the program to incorporate the management plan portions of the recommended subbasin plans. The Council calls for comments on the proposed plans, recommendations in the form of alternative provisions for the two subbasin plans or even entirely different subbasin plans for the Bitterroot and Blackfoot subbasins. The letter outlines the Council's schedule for the amendment process. If approved, the letter will be distributed immediately via U.S. mail and email to fish and wildlife managers, as well as to other interested parties from our large email distribution list. It will also be posted on the Council's website.

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November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Dear Interested Party,

In September 2009, the Council received subbasin plans for the Bitterroot and Blackfoot subbasins as recommended amendments to the Council's *Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program*. Montana Water Trust recommended the Bitterroot subbasin plan. Trout Unlimited recommended the Blackfoot plan.

The Council now proposes to amend the Fish and Wildlife Program to incorporate the management plan portions of the recommended subbasin plans for the Bitterroot and Blackfoot subbasins. Copies of the recommended subbasin plans for review may be found at [www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning/bb.htm](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning/bb.htm).

For the next 90 days, the Council welcomes comments on its proposal to incorporate the recommended subbasin plans for the Bitterroot and Blackfoot subbasins into the program. The Council hopes to focus comments on the proposed plans as recommended and on the idea of incorporating them into the program. But you are also free under Section 4(h) of the Northwest Power Act to recommend alternative provisions for these two subbasin plans or even an entirely different subbasin plan for these two subbasins. Additional information about the requirements for subbasin plans can be found in Part VI of the Council's 2009 Fish and Wildlife Program, ([www.nwcouncil.org/library/2009/2009-02.htm](http://www.nwcouncil.org/library/2009/2009-02.htm)) and at the Subbasin Planning page ([www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning)).

Comments or recommendations related to the proposed subbasin plans for the Bitterroot and Blackfoot subbasins must be submitted to the Council by February 11, 2010 to ensure consideration by the Council. You may submit comments or recommendations by following the instructions and link at [www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning/bb.htm](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning/bb.htm); by email to [comments@nwcouncil.org](mailto:comments@nwcouncil.org); or by mail to Mark Walker, Director of Public Affairs, Northwest Power and Conservation Council, 851 SW 6th Ave., Suite 1100, Portland, OR 97204.

Please note that the Council is not at this time accepting recommendations for subbasin plans in other basins that do not yet have plans in the program, nor recommendations for updates to existing subbasin plans. Recommendations for updating existing subbasin plans will be accepted by the Council in a subsequent program amendment process.

## **Background**

Under the Northwest Power Act, Congress charged the Council with developing and periodically amending a fish and wildlife program for the Columbia River Basin to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife affected by the development and operation of hydroelectric facilities while assuring the Pacific Northwest an adequate, efficient, economical and reliable power supply. The Council adopted the most recent version of its *Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program* ([www.nwcouncil.org/library/2009/2009-02.htm](http://www.nwcouncil.org/library/2009/2009-02.htm)) in February 2009.

The Fish and Wildlife Program currently includes management plans for fifty-seven Columbia River subbasins, including mainstem reaches and the estuary. The Council adopted the existing subbasin plans into the program following an extensive subbasin planning and program amendment process from 2002-05, described in detail in “Subbasin Plan Amendments: Findings and Responses to Comments” ([www.nwcouncil.org/library/2005/2005-13.htm](http://www.nwcouncil.org/library/2005/2005-13.htm)).

Subbasin plans contain the Fish and Wildlife Program’s specific objectives and measures for the tributary subbasins, specific mainstem reaches, and the Columbia River Estuary. Each plan contains a vision and biological objectives for that subbasin and identifies strategies necessary to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife in that subbasin. The subbasin plans thus reflect local policies and priorities while remaining consistent with the basinwide vision, biological objectives, and strategies. These subbasin management plans are available on the Council’s website at [www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning](http://www.nwcouncil.org/fw/subbasinplanning).

Subbasin plans provide the basis for review of most fish and wildlife projects proposed for funding to implement the Fish and Wildlife Program. The Council expects that projects implemented through the program will be consistent with the goals, limiting factors, and actions identified in the subbasin plans.

No subbasin plans for the Bitterroot or Blackfoot subbasins were submitted during the 2004-2005 program subbasin plan amendment process. Aware that local planners in those areas have been working to develop such plans, the Council agreed in the 2008 Fish and Wildlife Program to consider any plans for those subbasins when they were developed. Meanwhile, the Council continues to support the development of plans for those remaining subbasins without subbasin plans.

## **Review and adoption process**

All recommended subbasin plans for the Blackfoot and Bitterroot subbasins will undergo Council, public and scientific review.

The Council will evaluate the recommended subbasin plans, and any comments and additional recommendations that may be submitted, for consistency with the standards in the Northwest Power Act and the programmatic and basinwide elements of the program. The Council will also subject the proposed subbasin plans to independent scientific review, as called for in the Fish and Wildlife Program. The Council will make the results of the independent scientific reviews available for further public review and comment. As with all program amendments, the Council will provide a reasonable opportunity for oral comment in addition to written comment on the subbasin plans recommended for these two subbasins. At the conclusion of the process, the

Council will then decide on final program amendments based on the recommendations, supporting documents and the views and information obtained through public comment.

Steve Crow

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