

SOA 2009- 06

Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee Hatchery Subcommittee Statement of Agreement on Grant PUD's UCR Steelhead Mitigation Requirement

Submitted to PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee: 6/11/09 (previous drafts reviewed, April and May)

Approved by PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee: 6/18/09

Approved by PRCC: The PRCC was consulted and determined that they do not need to approve this SOA

Statement

The Hatchery Subcommittee of the Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC) agrees that the hatchery summer steelhead smolt production requirement for the Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County (Grant PUD) of 100,000 yearling steelhead shall be met by utilizing steelhead smolts reared at the Cassimer Bar Hatchery and released from over-winter acclimation ponds located in Salmon Creek and Omak Creek. Grant PUD will expand the cost share agreement with the Colville Tribes, who own and operate the Cassimer Bar Steelhead Hatchery Facility once the program has the required approval through the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Three-Step Process (i.e. NEPA, ESA, Permits, etc.). The program will then expand from the current pilot program production (20,000 yearlings) to include the entire Okanogan Subbasin smolt production goal of up to 200,000 yearlings, of which Grant PUD will fund up to 100,000 fish. In the interim, Grant PUD will meet this requirement through funding both the 20,000 yearling steelhead pilot program production and an additional 80,000 yearlings from the Wells Hatchery Program. The following step-wise approach will be followed:

- Increase yearling steelhead production at the Cassimer Program to 40,000 smolts for release by 2011 or when the current Omak Creek pilot program has demonstrated a short term "measure of success" supported by the Hatchery Subcommittee. Performance standards identified in the Okanogan Basin Summer Steelhead HGMP will be used to determine short term success. The remaining 60,000 obligation will be met by yearlings produced at the Wells Hatchery.
- Increase yearling steelhead production at the Cassimer Program to fully meet Grant PUD's steelhead production obligation of 100,000 smolts for release by 2015.

Monitoring and Evaluation will be coordinated through the PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee and implemented for Cassimer Bar Hatchery and Wells Hatchery by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville Tribes) and the Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County, respectively. Grant PUD will fund a portion of each M&E program based on the proportion of fish used to meet Grant PUD's production obligations.

Reporting requirements will include: 1) an annual report which describes the following activities: adult broodstock collection, hatchery operations, juvenile fish releases and monitoring and evaluation. An annual presentation at a PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee meeting of hatchery activities will also be required. If the Cassimer Bar steelhead program does not meet the "measure of success" as determined by the PRCC Hatchery Subcommittee, the program will be adaptively managed to correct shortcomings.

Background

The Cassimer Bar Steelhead Hatchery Program Master Plan and the Hatchery and Genetic Management Plan were submitted in November 2008 by the Colville Tribes to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) in fulfillment of Council requirements. The NPCC requires all organizations and entities seeking funding for artificial production projects involving new construction and/or programs that will increase fish destined for reintroduction to submit plans and documentation in keeping with the “Three-Step Review Process.”

The proposed project will 1) renovate and expand artificial production facilities at the existing Cassimer Bar Steelhead Hatchery, 2) increase broodstock collection sites within the Okanogan Subbasin, 3) acclimate smolts prior to release, and 4) recondition steelhead kelts (BPA funded).

The Master Plan focuses on the development of viable summer steelhead runs in three tributaries of the Okanogan River: Omak Creek, Loup Loup Creek, and Salmon Creek. These streams were identified in the Okanogan Subbasin Management Plan as having the most potential for reestablishment of natural-origin populations through habitat improvement and restoration.

Currently, steelhead in the Okanogan Subbasin are primarily hatchery-origin fish from Wells Hatchery located at Wells Dam. Between 1991 and 2000, only 6.5% of the adult steelhead passing Wells Dam were of natural-origin. The Interior Columbia Technical Recovery Team has identified Okanogan Summer Steelhead as a major population group belonging to the Upper Columbia River Distinct Population Segment (DPS). This DPS was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on August 18, 1997. Its ESA status (endangered) was recently confirmed by the U.S. District Court in June 2007.

The proposed project follows the recommendations of the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) by using localized broodstock collection and provides acclimation to minimize straying. This approach will increase the abundance, productivity, and diversity of Okanogan River steelhead which are a major population group within the Upper Columbia River Distinct Population Segment. The proposed program is intended to eventually eliminate out-of-Subbasin transfer and release of summer steelhead smolts into the Okanogan Subbasin