



March 5, 2009

1995 Third Street
Baker City, Oregon 97814

Kimberly Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20426

RE: Mason Dam Hydroelectric Project P-12686-001—Updated Study Report

Dear Ms. Bose:

Please consider this letter as Baker County's Updated Study Report for the Mason Dam Hydroelectric Project P-12686-001. In this report we will summarize the initial comments that were received at the Initial Study Report Meeting held on March 20, 2009 and then provide an update on what has been done to address these comments in the 2008 field season.

Study Plan 1 Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Assessment

Summary

From the 2007 field season and Initial Study Report Meeting (ISRM), Baker County received the following comments on the draft report for Study Plan 1.

- A map showing the collection sites in river miles is needed*
- Add lines to the figures to show the depth of the intake*
- Include the additional data collected at each site*

Also discussed was a review of the draft report by Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), would be beneficial to all stakeholders. Baker County decided that an additional sample season would not be conducted since the goal of the study was to gather baseline data.

Update

Baker County, as mentioned above, did not conduct a second study season. Baker County has been working with ODEQ to revise the current draft study report for submittal. The revised draft report is being completed and will be available soon for stakeholders review.

Study Plan 2 Vegetation, Rare Plant and Noxious Weeds Assessment

Summary

Study Plan 2 draft report was submitted after the 2007 field season and received the following comments:

- *Components necessary to accomplish the goals and objective (section 2.1) were missing*
- *Work products as described in section 2.5.3 are missing*
- *No electronic GIS files of the vegetation cover types and number of acres of each to be cleared, revegetated, and permanently lost*
- *An adequate resolution to show the wetlands, if any, that are specific to the Mason Dam area and discussion of the classification of the wetlands and distinguishes the degree of inundation in the areas affected by project construction, operation, and maintenance.*

The Forest Service agrees with FERC and added the following:

- *A correlation between potential habitats and the potential presence of the various TES plants that occupy certain habitats*
- *Identification of the new PNW R6 EIS invasive species list*
- *Complete descriptions and discussions of the various plant associations and their seral stages.*

ODFW concurs with FERC and the Forest Service and adds:

- *A management plan that includes methods for avoiding impacts, protecting resources, and conducting mitigation*

A portion of the information that was missing from the study plan based on the comments above was available in the Study Plan 3 report. Based on the overlap of information in the two reports a discussion of combining the two was mentioned at the ISRM. The Forest Service updated their Pacific Northwest Regional Foresters Special Status Species list (PNWRF), which will require additional surveys for the new species on the list. It was also discussed that the Forest Service and Baker County should work together to develop a weed management plan for the Preliminary License Proposal (PLP) that will then be included in the Final License Application (FLA).

Update

Study Plans 2 and 3 were consolidated to form a combined study report. This report was accomplished by conducting an additional field season (2008 field season) and by including the updated PNWRF list. The 2008 field season spanned from May-December 2008 as the weather did not hamper in-field work. The updated draft report (Combined Study Plan 2 & 3 draft report, submitted to the stakeholders excluding appendix H) addressed the comments received from the ISRM. While the Baker County Weed Department was the consultant for the 2007 field season for Study Plan 2, Eco West Consulting assumed the role for the 2008 field season.

Although Baker County and the Forest Service have yet to meet to develop a weed management plan in time for this update, Baker County is committed to completing this task prior to submittal of the Preliminary License Proposal (PLP).

Study Plan 3 Threatened, Endangered and Special Status Species Assessment

Summary

Comments on Study Plan 3 from ISRM were:

- *To evaluate the PNW Regional Forester Special Status Species list updated January 31, 2008 (Forest Service)*
- *Clarification of terminology used throughout the report (ODFW)*
- *Clarification of the amphibian and reptiles surveys (ODFW)*
- *Include the gray wolf (ODFW)*
- *Clarification of the presence and distribution of bull trout and redband trout (ODFW)*

During the discussion of the study plan's mitigation measures the addition of a fish screen was presented and that additional dialogue would be needed to address all of the different agency requirements.

Update

Study Plans 2 and 3 were consolidated to form a combined study report. This report was accomplished by conducting an additional field season (2008 field season) and by including the updated PNWRF list. The 2008 field season spanned from May-December 2008 as the weather did not hamper in-field work. The updated draft report (Combined Study Plan 2 & 3 draft report, submitted to the stakeholders excluding appendix H) addressed the comments received from the ISRM.

Baker County, at this point, has not conducted an additional discussion with the agencies on the fish screen design. Baker County will seek information from the agencies on design requirements in order for those designs to address all issues of concern when submitted for the PLP.

Study Plan 5 Recreation Visitor Survey and Use Study

Summary

Comments received on Study Plan 5 from the ISRM are as follows:

- *Little to no analysis if done of the data (FERC)*
- *A detailed discussion of how the analysis leads to the conclusion is needed (Forest Service)*
- *A description of restrictions that will be in place during construction is needed (Forest Service)*
- *The impact, if any, that will result from the project after construction should be included in the report (Forest Service)*
- *A Black Mountain Road survey done during the time of year that the powerline and substation will be constructed (Forest Service)*

A discussion is needed between the Forest Service and the Baker County Road Department to decide upon a construction window.

Update

Baker County concluded that the data collected was a representative sample for the recreating public and therefore additional surveying was not done. A link between the analysis of the data and the conclusion has been done for the final report that was submitted in August of 2008.

At this time Baker County has not met with the Forest Service to discuss the construction time schedule but will do so for the PLP.

Study Plan 6 Assess Traditional Cultural Properties

Summary

This study plan was not conducted in the 2007 field season, therefore no comments were received at the ISRM.

Update

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) have been conducting this study report for Baker County. The interviews have been completed and are being transcribed for the report.

Study Plan 7 Assess Archaeological and Historic-era Properties

Summary

This study plan was not conducted in the 2007 field season, therefore no comments were received at the ISRM.

Update

Kathryn M. Boula MA RPA was the consultant used by Baker County to conduct this study. The draft report was submitted in February 2009 for review by the stakeholders and Baker County is awaiting their responses.

In conclusion, Baker County looks forward to continuing its progress on the Mason Dam Hydroelectric Project and to meeting with stakeholders once again in March. Should you require additional information please do not hesitate to contact me at 541.523.6416 or [jyencopal@bakercounty.org](mailto: jyencopal@bakercounty.org).

Sincerely,

Jason Yencopal,
Project Manager
Baker County