

ASOTIN COUNTY *Conservation District*

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."

May 14, 2004

Judi Danielson, Chair
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

Subject: Support for and Approval of Asotin Creek Subbasin Plan

Dear Chair Danielson,

Asotin County Conservation District (ACCD) has been working with others involved to develop the Asotin Creek Subbasin Plan. ACCD staff and board members provided significant guidance throughout the process, from discussion of specific language to public input. A public review draft of the Plan was distributed on April 12, with public comment period closing on April 23, 2004. A document summarizing public comments received and appropriate responses were addressed in the plan.

During our meeting on May 13, 2004, the ACCD Board approved submittal of the Asotin Creek Subbasin Plan to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. This plan represents a joint effort on behalf of local stakeholders and Co-Managers to identify priorities for aquatic and terrestrial species habitat restoration and protection. These priorities are scientifically based, take into account local opportunities, and attempt to balance issues of concern for various stakeholders.

We approved this plan to guide the expenditure of Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) habitat project funding through the Northwest Power and Conservation Council for the next several years. The ACCD does not view this plan as the subbasin's Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance plan for listed species (aquatic or terrestrial), but agrees that it will inform the ESA compliance process that is being conducted through other planning efforts such as the Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan. This plan is provided with the recognition that additional refinements and scientific understanding might be needed. New information and plan implementation will likely result in updated priorities and strategies. Cooperation will continue to be needed by landowners to implement this plan. The ACCD is providing this plan with the understanding that private landowner involvement will be on a voluntary basis.

This planning process was built on the success, trust and collaboration that has been achieved through the *Asotin Creek Model Watershed Plan*. The *Model Watershed Plan* was completed in 1995 and it has served as a guide for watershed restoration and enhancement with cooperation

from local, state and federal agencies and recent participation and collaboration from the Nez Perce Tribe. The Asotin Creek Subbasin Plan incorporates success achieved through implementation of the *Model Watershed Plan* and the voluntary projects completed in prioritized watersheds for ESA Listed Species habitat restoration in uplands, riparian and instream areas. The *Model Watershed Plan* serves as an example of what can be accomplished on private lands with a plan that is completed by locals and addresses complex fresh water habitat requirements of anadromous salmonids. We hope for similar success with the Asotin Creek Subbasin Plan. We utilized local technical expertise and used the best available science to come up with prioritized areas for restoration and protection project. Data gaps remain which prevented full prioritization of strategies. However, geographic priorities were established to guide habitat restoration efforts in the most cost-effective methods possible. Public information and education were a large part of the *Model Watershed Plan* and we are gaining ground on public education and acceptance of complex ESA issues and requirements. Public outreach and education will need to continue if the subbasin plan is to be successful.

The following components of the plan are areas of special importance for the ACCD:

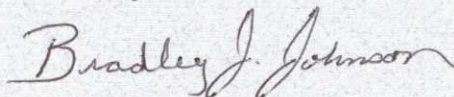
- Collecting current baseline data as identified in the research, monitoring, and evaluation component of the plan will be vital to enable the subbasin to track progress and successful implementation.
- Causes for limiting factors were identified in the plan based upon best professional judgment. Development of quantitative data regarding causes of habitat impairment is identified as a research priority within the plan. The District concurs with the need to fill this identified data gap to ensure that projects are being implemented to address the root causes of habitat impairment in priority areas.

While the ACCD agrees with the majority of information provided in the plan and its general direction regarding enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, we would like to highlight the following issues:

- Outdated information/data within the plan should be updated, corrected, and/or clarified.
- Private land purchases including fee simple title is not fully supported and recommends conservation easements or long-term leases to maintain agricultural and grazing management activities. The swapping or selling of current state or federal lands was not discussed but the need for Comprehensive Land Management Planning, which includes agriculture and grazing management, are a local priority.

We anticipate that these concerns will be addressed by ongoing discussions in the appropriate forum. We look forward to the opportunity for further refinement of the Asotin Creek Subbasin Plan and the benefits that will be achieved through its implementation.

Sincerely,



Bradley J. Johnson
Project Manager/Grant Writer
Asotin County Conservation District



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May 26, 2004

Judi Danielson, Chair
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

Dear Chair Danielson:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has been working for over a year with others involved in this subbasin to develop the Asotin Subbasin Plan. The Department has contributed to the process by providing technical guidance and products, as well as participating in strategy and management plan development together with stakeholders in the region.

The Department would like to express our support for the process that developed *The Asotin Subbasin Plan, May 2004 Version*. This plan represents a joint effort on behalf of local stakeholders and co-managers to use the best available science in combination with local interests and knowledge to set priorities and develop strategies and the final management plan. In particular, we applaud the efforts on the part of the subbasin planners to have an open and inclusive process that provided opportunities for participation by a wide range of state, federal, tribal and local managers, natural resource experts, landowners, local governments, and citizens.

Development of *The Asotin Subbasin Plan, May 2004 Version* followed the recommended guidelines in the Council's, *Technical Guide for Subbasin Planners* (NPCC 2001) to the extent appropriate to the ecological, cultural, social and economic realities of the subbasin – and consistent with the limitations of the available assessment tools, timeframe and budget.

The Department will participate in the open review process that runs through August 12th. During this time period we will conduct a thorough review of the plan and provide comments to NPCC staff for inclusion in the re-write period to follow. The Council and subbasin planners have our continued support in this process and we look forward to a successful conclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Andrews".

John Andrews
Region 1 Director

cc: John Marsh
Brad Johnson



May 28, 2004

Judi Danielson, Chair
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

Subject: Support for Submission of May 2004 Version of the Asotin, Lower Snake,
Tucannon and Walla Walla subbasin plans

Dear Chair Danielson,

Through this correspondence, the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board (the Board) provides general support for submission of the May 2004 Version of the Asotin, Lower Snake, Tucannon and Walla Walla subbasin plans to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (the Council). The Board self-initiated in 2002 to oversee development of the Snake River regional salmon recovery plan with the State of Washington's guidance and support. The Board is comprised of 21 voting members from the five counties in the recovery region and includes representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Tribe. The Board believes that participation of all communities and stakeholders in the recovery planning process is essential.

Although the Board is providing general support for submission of the May 2004 Version of the subbasin plans, governmental entities and stakeholders that comprise this Board may likely submit formal comments to the Council during the public comment period ending August 12, 2004. For example, the Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will continue to review the May 2004 Version of the subbasin plans to determine if they are consistent with tribal management actions and treaty rights, as required by section 4 of the Northwest Power Act.

Development of the subbasin plans was a collaborative effort led by the Asotin County Conservation District (Asotin Subbasin), Columbia Conservation District (Tucannon Subbasin), Pomeroy Conservation District (Lower Snake Mainstem Subbasin), and Walla Walla County/Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council (Walla Walla Subbasin). The plans integrate the perspectives of fish and wildlife managers, land managers, local governments, biologists and other scientists, landowners, interest groups, and the general public. The plans represent a step forward in collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting data, as well as in prioritizing restoration and protection activities for aquatic and terrestrial species and

habitats. The Board acknowledges that this collaborative process incorporated the best available science, given the limiting constraints of time and funding.


In addition, the Board recognizes that these versions of the subbasin plans are a snapshot in time. They will be revised and evolve over time. Regardless, they should be used to guide ongoing and potential fish and wildlife restoration and protection activities. The Board believes that coordination and communication of implementation is critical and that implementation needs to be focused towards on-the-ground actions.

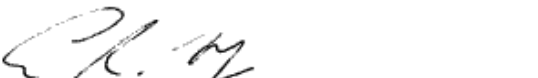
As you know, the Board is currently in the process of developing a recovery plan for salmonids listed under the Endangered Species Act in the applicable portions of the Snake and Mid-Columbia Evolutionary significant units. This includes areas in the Asotin, Lower Snake, Tucannon and Walla Walla subbasins located in the State of Washington. Species addressed will include sockeye, spring/summer chinook, fall chinook, steelhead and bull trout. Much work yet remains on synthesizing information across these subbasins to develop relationships and strategies between the four risk factors (hydropower, hatcheries, harvest and habitat) and the actions necessary to achieve delisting, and more importantly, healthy, harvestable populations. Therefore, it is the Board's intent to rely heavily on the assessments, biological objectives, and strategies developed in the May 2004 Version of these subbasin plans for the habitat component of the recovery plans.

The Board believes that building the recovery plans from community and agency supported products like subbasin plans will prove to be an efficient and effective strategy. Delisting threatened and endangered fish, and establishing healthy, harvestable populations will require unprecedented commitments from the funding and regulatory agencies, as well as from affected stakeholders and the general public. Implementation will occur over many years; therefore, maintaining continuity, consistency and oversight at the regional level throughout the recovery planning horizon is essential.

If you have questions or comments regarding this correspondence, please contact the Board's Director, Steve Martin, at 509-382-4115.

Sincerely,


Jay Holzmilller


Eric Myers