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United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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May 6, 1994

Ron Izatt
Department of Energy
Richland Field Office
P.O. Box 550
Richland, Washington 99352

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EDMC

Dear Mr. Izatt:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Washington State Office (WSO) appreciates the recent opportunity to meet with you and other Department of Energy (Energy) staff on April 13, 1994. I believe the discussions on our respective trusteeship responsibilities, the integration of natural resource management with the ongoing Superfund cleanup activities and potential avenues to address damage assessment were beneficial for all the participants. At the conclusion of the meeting we agreed to prepare a summary of the technical assistance the Service could provide to Energy, as you seek to expand your role and meet your responsibilities for natural resources under your trusteeship. That summary is enclosed.

The Service has a strong interest in the considerable natural resource values of the Hanford area and considers the shrub-steppe habitat to be unique and irreplaceable on both a regional and national scale. The large block of relatively undisturbed shrub-steppe habitat at Hanford represents a unique opportunity for protection of a drastically declining resource, in addition to providing added protection and enhancement for endangered, threatened and candidate species. We have also placed a high priority on acquiring and managing the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River and the North Slope. The Service would welcome the opportunity to formally assist Energy in the management of natural resources at Hanford.

I would like to follow up on our initial discussion with a second meeting to further explore partnership opportunities for our agencies. The FY95 budget markup will occur soon and this may provide an opportune time to advance a collaborative government partnership effort. Please contact me at (206) 753-9440 to arrange a time to meet. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David C. Frederick
State Supervisor

kb/kr
Enclosure

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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ECOLOGICAL SERVICES
Technical Assistance Capabilities

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Washington State Office (WSO) has several programs which can provide technical support and assistance to the Department of Energy (DOE) during the Hanford cleanup process. The Service's ecosystem approach to natural resource management provides a coherent ecological framework to direct the activities we undertake. Staff are presently located in three offices in Washington: Olympia, Moses Lake (sub-office) and Spokane (sub-office). A summary of those skills and expertise of particular interest to the Department of Energy (DOE) are provided below.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS. The Environmental Contaminants (EC) Program has the broad responsibility of identifying, evaluating, and mitigating the impact of environmental contaminants on the nation's fish and wildlife resources. The EC Program conducts environmental field sampling, monitoring and special studies of actual or suspected contaminated environments to determine effects on fish and wildlife resources. The staff routinely works with the Environmental Protection Agency in identifying less environmentally damaging remedial alternatives on Superfund sites, reviewing ecological risk assessments and assessing contaminant impacts to fish and wildlife resources. Contaminant assessments of national wildlife refuges and special studies on contaminant effects on endangered and threatened species, such as the bald eagle, are also conducted.

NATURAL RESOURCE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT. This sub-program is part of the EC Program and incorporates the highly specialized skills and knowledge needed to conduct natural resource damage assessments (NRDA). The WSO has been an active participant in several damage assessments and associated restoration planning for both Superfund sites (Commencement Bay, Elliott Bay) and oil spills (Nestucca, Tenyo Maru). From these assessment, the Service has gained experience in application of the regulations, an understanding of the complexities involved in documenting resource injuries, and an appreciation of the strategic tradeoffs between immediate restoration benefits through enhanced remediation projects versus delayed post-damage assessment restorations for residual injuries. As the Service can not seek natural resource damages against DOE, Service efforts would be focused on minimization of injuries during remedial activities, maximizing resource restorations and assisting DOE in any potential damage assessments.

ENDANGERED SPECIES. The Service is responsible for the implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This includes administration of the Section 6 grants to the States and Section 7 consultations with federal agencies. The Endangered Species program prepares listing packages for candidate species and develops recovery plans for endangered and threatened species. Endangered species biologists from WSO have worked with DOE contractors in the review of several draft documents including the Bald Eagle Site Management Plan for the Hanford Site and the Biological Assessment for Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species-Related to CERCLA Characterization Activities. A close working relationship would allow DOE to efficiently develop Biological

Assessments for Section 7 consultations. Service biologists could assist in the development of site management plans for listed endangered and threatened species and development of protective habitat guidance to prevent future listing of candidate species.

FEDERAL PROJECTS, PERMITS AND LICENSES. Biologists from this office have extensive experience in the evaluation and planning process of a broad spectrum of federally implemented or permitted water-development projects, ranging from minor Corps of Engineers permits to the coordinated operation and configuration of the federal dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Skills include the evaluation of existing fish and wildlife resources and habitat values using a variety of qualitative and quantitative techniques including Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP), prediction of project-related impacts, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document preparation and review, development of proposals to mitigate impacts through avoidance, compensation, or enhancement, and post-project monitoring. The Service regularly assists with developing mitigation plans for a wide variety of projects and can provide input and effort in the development of a Hanford sitewide mitigation plan.

WASHINGTON STATE ECOSYSTEMS CONSERVATION PROGRAM. The Washington State Ecosystems Conservation Program (WSECP) is a relatively new Service program in the WSO. Working with private landowners and conservation districts, the Service develops cooperative agreements to implement habitat restoration and improvement projects and public education activities. In 1993, the WSECP restored, enhanced and benefitted 2,500 acres of wetlands, 80 miles of riparian and stream habitat and 116,980 acres of associated upland habitats. WSECP staff are skilled in the design and implementation of habitat restorations and could assist in remediated site restorations and development and conduct of vegetative performance criteria and monitoring plans.