



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Mid-Pacific Region
Klamath Basin Area Office
6600 Washburn Way
Klamath Falls, OR 97603-9365

IN REPLY REFER TO:
KO-300 (KHiatt)
ENV - 7.00

DEC 1 2012

Ms. Irma Lagomarsino
Supervisor, Arcata Area Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
1655 Heindon Road
Arcata, California 95521

Subject: Request for Formal Consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on Klamath Project Operations from April 1, 2013, through March 31, 2023

Dear Ms. Lagomarsino:

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared the enclosed Final Biological Assessment (BA) on the continued operations of the Klamath Project from April 1, 2013, through March 31, 2023. The Klamath Project is located in south-central Oregon and northeastern California. Reclamation has determined that the proposed action may affect species listed pursuant to the ESA (50 C.F.R. § 402.14 (a)) and is requesting initiation formal ESA Section 7(a)(2) consultation simultaneously with both the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The BA contains: (1) a detailed description of the Project and its operation; (2) a description of the specific area that may be affected by the action; (3) a description of listed species and critical habitat; (4) a description of the effects of the action; and (5) incorporates by reference other relevant available information cited in the BA. The information in the BA represents the best scientific and commercial data available.

Since 1991, minimum Upper Klamath Lake (UKL) elevations, and since 2001, Klamath River flows downstream of Iron Gate Dam, have been prescribed through a series of Biological Opinions from the USFWS and the NMFS. Reclamation, USFWS, and NMFS recognize that past proposed actions and biological opinions have not provided the full range of flexibility and benefits for listed fish species or Klamath Project irrigators that is needed in order to effectively manage the limited water supplies of the Klamath River system. In recognition of the competing needs within the Klamath Basin, Reclamation is proposing an innovative solution to ongoing operations that defines the Proposed Action for 2013 through 2023 to maximize the certainty and quantity of available water for irrigation deliveries while meeting its regulatory requirement to avoid jeopardy to federally-listed species and adversely modifying or destroying designated critical habitats.

The proposed action in the enclosed BA includes a water supply based operational strategy and consists of a water management approach for Upper Klamath Lake and the Klamath River that mimics natural hydrologic conditions observed in the Upper Klamath Basin. In addition, a real time management component is included during the spring and summer period to reduce the impacts of Project operations on ESA-listed species. A key driver and benefit of this concept is a much greater certainty, early in the year, on the amount of water that will be available for Upper Klamath Lake, the Klamath River and the Klamath Project. This approach consists of defining, starting, in March of each year, the water to be reserved in Upper Klamath Lake for suckers, the volume of water to be released to the Klamath River for coho salmon (Environmental Water Account), and the supply of water for irrigation use within the Klamath Project. This strategy is a powerful and innovative approach that creates a decision making process that has the flexibility to optimize limited water supplies to benefit fish and farmers instead of previous water management regimes that managed to rigid minimums.

Reclamation believes all information necessary to initiate formal consultation has been provided. Reclamation looks forward to continued consultation and exchange of information during this timeframe and request the opportunity to review interim drafts of the joint Biological Opinion prior to its finalization. Reclamation hopes that through intensive coordination the formal consultation can be completed prior to the 2013 irrigation season.

The Final BA will also be posted on Reclamation's Web site, www.usbr.gov/mp/KBAO. Please feel free to contact Jennie Land, Resource Management Division Chief, at (541) 883-6935 if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Jason Phillips
Area Manager

Identical Letter Sent To:

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National Marine Fisheries Service
1655 Heindon Road
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Ron Larson
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Continued on next page.

Identical Letter Sent To:

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