



November 20, 2009

Derek Sandison
Washington Department of Ecology
15 West Yakima Avenue, Suite 200
Yakima, WA 98902

Dear Mr. Sandison:

This letter is provided as public comment for the November 23, 2009, Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Work Group meeting on the Discussion Draft Integrated Package.

Founded in 1916, Seattle Audubon's mission is to cultivate and lead a community that values and protects birds and the natural environment. With more than 5,000 members households, we are the largest Audubon chapter in Washington and actively engaged in a variety of bird conservation programs. Our volunteers and members have been deeply involved in protecting and restoring Northern Spotted Owls for over 30 years.

Habitat loss has been and continues to be one of the largest threats to this E.S.A. listed bird species. We currently are working hard to find ways to increase the amount of suitable spotted owl habitat in Washington State, so we were deeply troubled to learn that your Work Group was considering potential expansion of Bumping Lake. As you are likely aware, such an expansion would flood spotted owl critical area habitat, including nearly 2,000 acres of ancient forests. This would be the exact opposite of what is needed to help reverse the accelerating decline of Northern Spotted Owl populations.

Enlarging Bumping Lake has been considered and rejected many times over the past 50 years, due in large part to environmental concerns. As recently as last year the Bureau of Reclamation concluded "that the proposal for Bumping Lake Enlargement Alternative will be eliminated from further consideration in the Storage Study" because of the adverse environmental impacts such a project would create. (see *Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study, FPR/EIS, Bureau of Reclamation, December 2008.*)

Seattle Audubon is strongly opposed to including an expanded Bumping Lake reservoir as part of any "Integrated Package." While we commend your group for working to address water issues in the Yakima basin, we urge you to not re-open old fights regarding Bumping Lake. Doing so would create significant new problems for your efforts by inserting highly sensitive spotted owl issues onto your already complex agenda.

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding our concerns, feel free to contact me via email at shawnc@seattleaudubon.org or phone at 206/523-8243.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Shawn Cantrell'.

Shawn Cantrell
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Christine Gregoire
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Maria Cantwell