

6450-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Bonneville Power Administration

Finding of No Significant for the Northeast Oregon Wildlife Mitigation Project

AGENCY: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Department of Energy (DOE).

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

SUMMARY: BPA needs mitigation for the loss of wildlife habitat caused by development of the Federal Columbia River Power System. BPA proposes to partially satisfy this need by entering an agreement with the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) to acquire and manage approximately 6600 ha (16,500 acres) of wildlife habitat in Wallowa County, Oregon, and possibly in Asotin County, Washington. BPA has prepared an Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA-1160) evaluating the proposed project. Based on the analysis in the EA, BPA has determined that the proposed action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required and BPA is issuing this FONSI.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Linda McKinney, Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 3621 (ECN), Portland, Oregon, 97208-3621, phone number 503-230-3223, fax number 503-230-5699.

Public Availability: This FONSI will be distributed to all persons and agencies known to be interested in or affected by the proposed action or alternatives.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed agreement would transfer funds to the NPT to acquire 4120 ha (10,300 acres) of land in Wallowa County, Oregon, owned by Helm Resources, Inc., and purchase of up to 2480 ha (6,200 acres) of nearby additional property by fee-title or conservation easement. The properties would be managed for wildlife conservation consistent with a Project Management Plan the NPT would prepare in consultation with affected

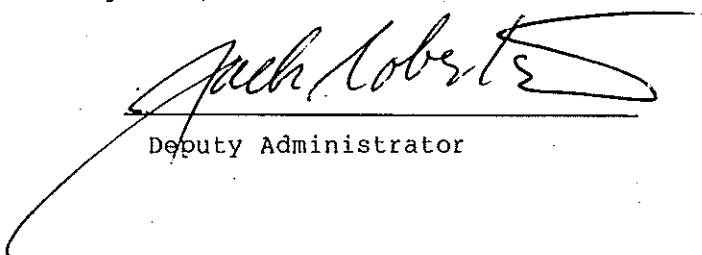
state and Federal agencies, local governments, nearby landowners and other affected interests. Anticipated activities include wildlife habitat and population monitoring, vegetation management and development of water features. Public access would be allowed when and where compatible with wildlife goals.

Only No Action (i.e., to not enter the proposed agreement) was considered as an alternative to the proposed action.

Potential impacts of the proposed action are: (1) slow improvement of surface water quality; (2) slow changes to some existing vegetation patterns, with increasing biological diversity; (3) increased populations of target wildlife species, i.e., downy woodpecker, song sparrow, yellow warbler, western meadowlark, mule deer, chukar, California quail, and river otter; and (4) potential reduced grazing, logging, and farming on up to 2480 ha (6,200 acres). There are two main reasons why these impacts would not be significant. First, most impacts would result gradually from natural succession of vegetation patterns, with some assistance from management action. Encouragement of desirable plant species (especially native species), discouragement of exotic species, and grazing control would eventually increase biological diversity on wildlife mitigation lands. Second, land use changes would not be significant because most of the land the project would affect is not currently in commercial use, or would likely continue a level of economic use consistent with project wildlife objectives; further, land where economic production would potentially be reduced is minor in relation to other lands in the general area remaining available for similar uses. Management plans would ensure protection of cultural resources and endangered species, and consistency with local regulatory programs for agricultural or forest burning. Consultation with State and Federal land managers in preparing the Project Management Plan would ensure consistency with management of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, the Chief Joseph Wildlife Management Area, and the Wild and Scenic Snake River and the Grand Ronde. (Mitigation of listed plant per conversation with Tom McKinney, 8/2/96.)

Determination: Based on the information in the EA, as summarized here, BPA determines that the proposed action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq. Therefore, an EIS will not be prepared and BPA is issuing this FONSI.

Issued in Portland, Oregon, on August 7, 1996.



Deputy Administrator

