

**United States Department of the Interior****FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181

IN REPLY REFER TO:

UCFWO/AES

MAY 5 2006

Ms. Karen L. Durham-Aguilera, P.E.
Director of Programs
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
1124 NW Couch Street, Suite 500
P.O. Box 2870
Portland, Oregon 97208-2870

Dear Ms. Durham-Aguilera:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received your letter, dated May 4, 2006, in which you describe the operations the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) plan to implement at Libby Dam in 2006. In your letter, you provided a brief description of two possible operating scenarios for flow operations of the Dam during spring/summer of 2006: 1) full powerhouse releases plus 10,000 cfs, and 2) a "stacked flow" operation. You noted that the Corps plans to implement the stacked flow operation at Libby Dam this year. You also noted that this operation is designed to meet the habitat attributes included in the Service Biological Opinion regarding the Effects of Libby Dam Operations on Kootenai River White Sturgeon and Bull Trout and Kootenai Sturgeon Critical Habitat, dated February 18, 2006 (2006 BiOp), and briefly outlined your rationale as to how it will meet those attributes.

As you are aware, the focus of the 2006 BiOp is to implement actions that will meet habitat attributes necessary to adequately provide for successful Kootenai sturgeon spawning, and in-river reproduction. The Corps and BPA have flexibility to select how they will achieve the attributes, but must demonstrate that the actions taken will achieve those habitat attributes.

The Service agrees that the stacked flow operation you plan to implement in 2006 is consistent with the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) included in the 2006 BiOp (specifically RPA Component 1, Action Items 1.1 and 1.3). The Service further agrees that this operation is consistent with the Incidental Take Statement of the 2006 BiOp.

I urge the Corps and BPA to continue to make every possible effort to implement actions that will meet the habitat attributes included in the 2006 BiOp, at a time when it will be of most biological benefit to the critically endangered Kootenai sturgeon.

Please keep us apprised of your efforts.

Sincerely,

David Wesley
Acting Regional Director

Ms. Durham-Aguilera

2

cc:

Bonneville Power Administration, Portland (Steve Wright)