



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Pacific
Northwest
Region

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File Code: 2670

Date: June 9, 2005

Mr. Bob Lohn
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries, Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115

Dear Mr. Lohn:

In accordance with regulations on interagency cooperation (50 CFR 402) pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (as amended), the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6) requests consultation on the Proposed Action described and analyzed in the *Pacific Northwest Region Invasive Plant Program; Preventing and Managing Invasive Plants Final Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS). The selected alternative (Proposed Action) of this EIS will amend the Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) of all National Forests in Region 6: Colville, Deschutes, Ochoco (including the Crooked River National Grassland), Fremont, Winema, Gifford Pinchot (including Washington portions of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area), Malheur, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, Mount Hood (including Oregon portions of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area), Okanogan, Wenatchee, Olympic, Rogue River, Siskiyou, Siuslaw, Umatilla, Umpqua, Wallowa-Whitman (including Hell's Canyon National Recreation Area), and Willamette National Forests.

The Proposed Action described in the EIS and analyzed in the Biological Assessment (BA) amends Forest Plans to improve and increase consistency of invasive plant prevention and allows the use of an expanded set of invasive plant treatment tools. The Proposed Action also includes restoration requirements and an inventory and monitoring framework. Key features of the Proposed Action include reducing ground disturbance and limiting the introduction and spread of invasive plants; increased emphasis on early detection and treatment of new infestations; increased emphasis on protecting and restoring healthy native plant communities; and the requirement for long-term site goals that will link treatment to prevention, restoration and monitoring in an integrated and adaptive process. The Proposed Action will substantially improve the ability of Region 6 to restore streamside areas that have been degraded by invasive plant species; potentially contributing to the protection and restoration of designated or proposed critical habitat and recovery of ESA-listed anadromous fish species.

The enclosed BA addresses the LRMP amendments, as well as the potential effects from future activities conducted according to the LRMP amendments. The Proposed Action (i.e. the LRMP amendments including standards, goals, and objectives) **does not authorize any activities or projects to be implemented**. Future projects must conduct site-specific analysis and consultation, when applicable, before implementation can occur. However, future actions (such as the use of certain herbicides) can be considered for use because of the LRMP amendments; it



is the potential effects of these future actions that the BA analyzes. The BA concludes that future actions conducted according to the LRMP amendments “May Affect” the following species and designated critical habitat:

Species	Designated ESU or Critical Habitat
Chinook Salmon	Snake River Spring/Summer-run
	Snake River Fall-run
	Upper Columbia River spring-run
	Upper Willamette River
	Lower Columbia River
	Puget Sound
	Critical habitat for Snake River Spring/Summer chinook salmon ESU
	Critical habitat for Snake River Fall chinook salmon ESU
Coho Salmon	Southern Oregon/ Northern California Coast
	Critical habitat for Southern Oregon/ Northern California Coast Coho ESU
Chum Salmon	Hood Canal summer-run
	Columbia River
Sockeye Salmon	Snake River sockeye
	Critical habitat for Snake River sockeye salmon ESU
Steelhead	Upper Columbia River
	Lower Columbia River
	Snake River Basin
	Middle Columbia River
	Upper Willamette River

Although the effect determinations for specific future project-level actions have not been determined, we request formal consultation on the proposed amendment to Region 6 LRMPs.

In addition, the LRMP amendments “May Affect” the following species and critical habitat proposed for listing or designation under the ESA:

Species	Proposed ESU or Critical Habitat
Chinook Salmon	Critical habitat for Upper Columbia River spring-run ESU
	Critical habitat for Upper Willamette River ESU
	Critical habitat for Lower Columbia River ESU
	Critical habitat for Puget Sound ESU
Coho Salmon	Lower Columbia River
	Oregon Coast
	Critical habitat for Oregon Coast ESU
Chum Salmon	Critical habitat for Hood Canal summer-run ESU
	Critical habitat for Columbia River ESU
Steelhead	Critical habitat for Upper Columbia River ESU
	Critical habitat for Lower Columbia River ESU
	Critical habitat for Snake River Basin ESU
	Critical habitat for Middle Columbia River ESU
	Critical habitat for Upper Willamette River ESU

Although the effect determinations for specific future project-level actions have not been determined, we request conferencing following formal consultation procedures on the proposed amendment to Region 6 LRMPs for the Proposed Oregon Coast Coho, Lower Columbia River Coho, and all the Proposed Critical Habitat listed above.

We plan to sign the Record of Decision for the EIS by September 8, 2005, and therefore, request conclusion of formal consultation/conference before that date. To meet this schedule, we request a final draft of the Biological Opinion for Forest Service review by August 22. We will respond with any comments by August 29.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Shawna Bautista at: (503) 808-2697.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mike Ash (for)
LINDA GOODMAN
Regional Forester

1 Enclosure
1- Biological Assessment

cc:
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Michael Tehan, NOAA
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