



THE LEADING EDGE

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*Newsletter of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project-
Evaluating and Implementing Ecosystem Management within the Interior Columbia Basin*

Project Sends Report to Congress

Public Comments on Report to Congress due August 26

Public comments are welcome through August 26, 2000 on a Report to Congress prepared by the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (Project). The *Report to the Congress on the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project* is in response to the 1998 and 2000 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Acts. This report outlines:

- Land and resource management decisions to be made as a result of the Final EIS for the Project;
- An estimate of the time and cost of each of these decisions;
- An estimate of goods and services from the federal lands managed by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management for the first five years of implementation; and

- A description of the decision making process to be used to establish priorities in response to funding levels.

The Report has been available for a 120-day public comment period that ends August 26, 2000. The 120-day comment period was mandated by the 2000 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. Over 12,000 copies of the report were printed and mailed to the Project mailing list.

Much of the information in the Report, in particular the information on production of goods and services, can also be found in Chapter Four of the Supplemental Draft EIS. The comment period on the Supplemental Draft EIS closed July 6, 2000.

The Supplemental Draft EIS outlines three management alternatives for 63 million acres of Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service-administered lands in eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho and western Montana. The Supplemental Draft EIS supplements the *Eastside and Upper Columbia River Basin Draft EISs* released in June, 1997.

Public Comment Period Closes on EIS

The *Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (Supplemental Draft EIS) was available for public review and comment from April 6 to July 6, 2000.

A second document out for public review until August 26, 2000, a *Report to the Congress on the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project*, was written in response to the 1998 and 2000 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Acts (see related article).

The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

(Supplemental Draft EIS), outlines three management alternatives for 63 million acres of public land in eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho and western Montana. The Supplemental Draft EIS supplements the *Eastside and Upper Columbia River Basin Draft EISs* released in June, 1997.

The number of public comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS was much less than the volume received on the Draft EISs issued in 1997. At the July 6 deadline, a total of 300+/- comment letters were received. This number compares to 83,000 comments on the Draft EISs.

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Public Comment

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"I am pleased with the comments we received," said Project Manager Susan Giannettino. "Despite the number being much lower compared to the number of comments on the Draft EISs, the quality of the comments is high. It is clear that many people were very thoughtful and comprehensive in their comments."

In sharp contrast to the Draft EISs, the Supplemental Draft EIS comment period did not receive a heavy volume of preprinted post cards and identical form letters. In 1997, interest groups used an organized effort to hand out post cards to tourists in Glacier National Park and at Old Faithful Lodge in Yellowstone

National Park, among other places. People were encouraged to sign their names and addresses and mail the cards as a comment on the Draft EISs. These mass mailings were catalogued and recorded and were placed in the Project's administrative record. Because the thousands of preprinted comments were identical, the content represented one piece of substantive input on the Draft EISs.

Giannettino pointed out that with other Federal initiatives currently out for public comment at the same time, it should be no surprise there are fewer comments on the Supplemental Draft EIS. "I would also like to think that the smaller volume of comments

reflects the fact that we were responsive to the comments on the Draft EISs, and incorporated public comments into the strategy we crafted with the Supplemental Draft EIS."

Public comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS will be considered in the development of a Final EIS and Record of Decision which will amend 62 land use plans for the 32 National Forests and BLM administrative units within the project area. The Final EIS will also replace Forest Service and BLM interim strategies designed to ensure protection of anadromous and inland fish habitat and old forests while the Project's long-term strategies were being developed.

Letters to the Editor

Three cheers for the May GAO report and its criticism of ICBEMP. You folks have continually failed to make your time lines, you have overspent your budget and are the closest thing to a perpetual motion money spending machine. How much has ICBEMP spent since its inception? This is money and personnel that could have gone to the field units for land management and protection. Instead you continue to hold your meeting, take comments and if you look seriously at the end product really produce little of value. More than likely you will once again report to Congress that you were unable to complete your report and that you need additional funding, personnel and time. If you folks were working in the private sector you would have been fired. A suggestion, if you can't wrap this thing up in FY 2000 declare the project done and shut down the operation. The FS and BLM field people and the taxpayers will applaud your decision.

Al Reuter
Retired USFS
Wyoming

In reference to your newsletter of December 1, 1999, regarding ICBEMP management of salmon recovery in the Columbia Basin: You have not addressed all of the issues that have a very large impact on the salmon recovery program.

Along the west coast of the USA and Alaska, there are a great number of fish cannery ships that are supported by up to 30 small boats netting all types of fish outside of the 40 mile limit.

Thousands of sea lions in the mouth of all west coast rivers and bays, they take one bite out of a salmon then go for another one.

All of the bird and fish ducks on small islands at the mouth of the rivers along the west coast that eat the fingerlings as they are on their way out to sea.

Another issue that should be covered by your EIS is flood control that all of the dams on the west coast rivers are controlling at this time. New freeways that have been built next to the rivers after the dams were built, have a large impact on the water run off. If we have a big snow melt followed by heavy rains, this could cause flood down stream in all of the cities along the rivers if some of the dams are removed.

The US and state government have spent hundreds of million of dollars and are regulating thousands of acres of land trying to control turbidity in our waterways across the USA claiming that turbidity in the water is harmful to the fish. Please have your fish scientist make a scientific study of the Yukon River in Alaska. This river has so much turbidity in the spring of the year that it's doubtful if it could be measured. It never clears up all year long. The Yukon River has one of the largest fisheries in Alaska.

The following information with these comments is a portion of a scientific study on the Rogue River on the southwest Oregon coast. This study was made over a three year period. The conclusion of Dr. Ward's study state the we demand real honest to goodness scientific biological control of all our stream and fish problems.

Sincerely,
Robert V. Hyde
Vancouver, WA

In the past 5 years I have traveled throughout the Columbia Basin and in the 60's I worked in every Basin state for the USFS and BLM.

I think the reason the cattlemen are upset over any cut back of AUM's (animal unit months) or change in the grazing duration is due to the condition of private ranch land. Many acres of valley ranch land is covered by various species of Juniper and sagebrush. The lack of brush control has led to less private lands grasslands. The rancher takes the least cost approach to land management and has avoided controlled fall burning and today it's a huge problem. I won't even go into noxious weeds as that's another issue.

The salmon and steelhead listing will bring about huge changes in irrigation for pastures and hay lands will decrease.

If a rancher can't do it from a saddle on a horse it don't get done!

Sincerely,
Anthony Peiffer
Bellevue, WA 98006

In the December 1999 edition of the Leading Edge, we began a "Letters to the Editor" feature. Since that time we have received three letters. Thank you, to those people who took the time to express their opinion.

This feature will be discontinued due to lack of interest. The Editor

Terrestrial Habitat Report Released

Science Report Shows a Significant Decline in Habitats Throughout the Basin

The Science Advisory Group has released a publication (USDA Forest Service PNW-GTR-485) on terrestrial species in the interior Columbia River Basin titled, *Source Habitats for Terrestrial Vertebrates of Focus in the Interior Columbia Basin: Broad-Scale Trends and Management Implications*. This publication was used in the development of the Supplemental Draft EIS for the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (Project).

In preparing the source habitats publication, habitat requirements and trends for 91 terrestrial vertebrate species were analyzed for the 145 million acres of public and private lands within the basin. The publication focuses on species for which previously collected data indicated declines in populations, habitats, or both, and whose habitats could be evaluated with broad-scale mapping techniques. The publication evaluates changes in source habitats from early European settlement (circa 1850 to 1890) to current (circa 1985 to 1995) conditions and specifically addresses the effects of roads on these species. The report also identifies measures and proposals that can be taken to improve habitats for these species.

Example species whose habitats were evaluated include white-headed woodpecker, American marten, northern goshawk, Canada lynx, wolverine, pronghorn, sage grouse, and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The publication documents that habitats for species associated with old-forest structural stages, native grasslands, and native shrublands have undergone strong, widespread decline.

Implications for managing old-forest structural stages include consideration of (1) conservation of habitats in subbasins and watersheds where decline in old forests has been strongest; (2) silvicultural manipulations, such as thinning or burning, of mid-seral forests to accelerate development of late-seral stages; and (3) long-term silvicultural manipulations (e.g., multiple entries coupled with thinning and burning) and the accommodation of fire and other disturbance regimes in all forest types to hasten development

and improvement in the amount, quality, and distribution of old-forests.

Implications for managing grasslands and shrublands include the potential to (1) conserve native grasslands and shrublands where native plants are prevalent; (2) control or eradicate exotic plants on native grasslands and shrublands where the potential for exotic plant invasion is high; and (3) restore native plant communities by using intensive management practices (e.g., livestock grazing manipulations, native seedings, or soil inoculation) where the potential for restoration is high.

The publication also found that more than 70 percent of the 91 species are affected negatively by roads. In mapping road density in relation to source habitat for four carnivore species, the publication found that in many subbasins, the negative effects of roads were the primary threat to the species' survival. Improving this situation will require a substantial reduction in the density of existing roads as well as a reduction in road access (for such uses as the management of livestock grazing, timber harvest, recreation, hunting, trapping, mineral development, and other activities).

Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service field offices will use the publication as broad-scale context for conducting finer-scale habitat evaluations for individual species and groups of species. Local managers will relate the findings to local conditions as a means of more effectively conserving and restoring the fragmented habitats of these species.

To order a copy of PNW-GTR-485, call 503-808-2138, or write to: PNW Publications, Portland Habilitation Center, 5312 NE 148th, Portland, OR 97230-3438. Copies can also be ordered by sending an e-mail request to Diane Smith at desmith@fs.fed.us. The publication can be viewed on-line or downloaded at <http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs.htm>.

Governors: Salmon Protection Will Require a Balanced Interior Columbia River Basin Land Use Strategy

On July 25, 2000, in two news conferences, the Governors of Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Washington jointly released a document containing their recommendations for the protection and restoration of fish in the Columbia River Basin.

The document addresses a wide range of issues concerning protection of salmon. It contains a recommendation pertaining to the Interior Columbia Basin. That portion of the report is reprinted here:

Interior Columbia Basin

Fully 50-60 percent of the land area in the Columbia River Basin is owned or managed by the federal government, including major headwater areas so important for fish.

We believe modifications to management practices on these lands is essential to salmon recovery.

To assure these needed modifications occur, the interior Columbia River Basin

needs a balanced strategy that can provide for stable and predictable multiple-use management on federal lands for fish and wildlife and other purposes while permitting needed flexibility, particularly on private lands. The existence of such a strategy is long overdue, and we urge Congress and the Administration to work with the region to have the strategy in place by year's end.

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