



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*

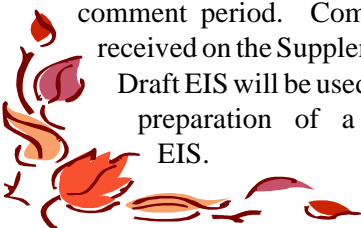
Release of the Supplemental Draft EIS

In our last newsletter, we reported the Supplemental Draft EIS (SDEIS) would be released for public review in September, 1999. The release has been delayed until February 2000.

The Science Advisory Group is completing their evaluation of environmental effects of the alternatives. The evaluation is taking longer than originally estimated. When the analysis is complete, the EIS team will use this information to fine-tune the alternatives and finish writing the environmental effects section (Chapter Four) of the SDEIS, which compares the alternatives and discloses their effects.

The delay in release of the Supplemental Draft EIS will allow the Project to take advantage of the considerable scientific resources available in the federal land management agencies. Time is also being made available for internal review of the document within the agencies.

The Supplemental Draft EIS will be available for a 90-day comment period. Comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS will be used in the preparation of a Final EIS.



Salmon Recovery in the Interior Columbia Basin

The federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service in the Interior Columbia River Basin provide important habitat for salmon and steelhead. Unfortunately, many factors conspire to threaten the viability of these environmentally and culturally important species.

Habitat conditions, in combination with **hatchery** practices, **harvest** of salmon and steelhead, and the generation and use of **hydroelectric power** all greatly influence the survival of salmon and steelhead. These factors have been referred to as the "**Four Hs**" of salmon recovery.

The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (Project) is developing a strategy to address critical, broad-scale forest and rangeland health, aquatic and riparian health, and social and economic issues. The strategy will apply to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management administered lands in the region. The aquatic portion of the strategy will essentially be the habitat "H" for federal lands.

The Project's strategy goes beyond just aquatic habitat issues, and strives to improve the health and resiliency of

forest, rangeland, riparian and aquatic systems, promote diverse plant and animal communities, maintain and improve air and water quality, and provide a sustainable and reliable source of goods and services from public lands.

The Project's Draft Environmental Impact Statements (EISs), issued in May 1997, included a discussion of the role of habitat compared to hatcheries, harvest, and hydropower. The Draft EISs stated that while many of the alternative land management strategies would improve existing habitat conditions for steelhead and stream-type Chinook salmon, "Downstream stresses associated with the hydropower system are one of the major causes of declining anadromous fish runs in the Snake River, notwithstanding land use activities in the watersheds."

The Draft EISs concluded that without a comprehensive approach that addresses all causes of mortality, the expected benefit of land management actions would not ensure persistence of anadromous stocks in the Project area.

The Draft EISs, however, did not provide specifics on other necessary measures to improve the prospects for long-term survival and recovery of salmon and steelhead in the Interior

see Four Hs continued on page 2

Four Hs *Continued from page 1*

Columbia Basin because the actions are under the authorities of other federal and nonfederal entities.

There are now several initiatives underway which address the other "Hs": hydropower, harvest, and hatcheries. These initiatives include the Multi-Species Framework led by the Northwest Power Planning Council, a "Four H Paper" being prepared by a caucus of federal agencies, and a study of Snake River dams by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Multi-Species Framework

The Multi-Species Framework, initiated by the Northwest Power Planning Council, Columbia River Basin Tribes, and the United States Government, is a process where the agencies and groups involved in management of the Columbia River have come together to identify management options for salmon recovery. They are developing alternative strategies for addressing all of the Four Hs - and assessing the biological, social, and economic outcomes of those alternatives. The regional governments, Tribes, and stakeholders have developed these management options as part of an open public process. The Framework will issue a report in the fall of 1999 that documents and evaluates the alternatives. For more information see www.nwframework.org.

Four H Paper

The nine federal agencies that have responsibilities in the Columbia River Basin have formed a caucus to facilitate federal participation in the regional consensus process. They are working on a unified and coordinated approach for the Basin, to restore species listed under the Endangered Species Act, and to achieve a healthier ecosystem. The Federal Caucus is preparing a "Four H Paper"

describing and analyzing actions needed to recover Endangered Species Act - listed species, organized around the four factors that affect the salmon life-cycle. A working paper summarizing the 4 H paper was made available for public review on November 16, 1999. For more information see www.bpa.gov/federalcaucus.

Snake River Study

The Army Corps of Engineers is also currently preparing a draft environmental impact statement on the operation of federal dams in the lower Snake River. The study is being conducted as a result of a 1995 Biological Opinion by the National Marine Fisheries Service which called for significant changes to the federal Columbia River Power System in order to recover Snake River Salmon. The Biological Opinion calls for a decision in 1999 regarding long-term operation and configuration of the four lower Snake River dams. The Army Corps of Engineers is looking at: 1) maintaining the existing system including planned improvements to fish passage; 2) major system improvements such as surface bypass for juvenile fish; and 3) lower Snake River drawdown, which would be implemented by removing the earthen portion of each dam and reestablishing a free-flowing river.

The information being developed for the Snake River Study also contributes significantly to the Four H Paper as it relates to the configuration of the federal Columbia River Power System. For more information see <http://www.nww.usace.army.mil/html/offices/pl/er/studies/lsrcpublic/lsrcmain.htm>.

ICBEMP

As part of its ecosystem management strategy, the ICBEMP

Supplemental Draft EIS will include an aquatic strategy. This aquatic strategy will replace PACFISH and InFish, which currently make up the interim direction guiding aquatic and riparian management on federal lands. The Final EIS and Record of Decision will provide direction for addressing the federal habitat component of the Four Hs. The federal habitat information and strategy being developed by this Project is being used by the federal caucus in the preparation of the Four H Paper.

How these Initiatives Fit Together

While each of the initiatives are specific in their focus, they share as one of their objectives, the improvement of aquatic and riparian health in the Columbia River Basin.

Incorporating information from these other studies into the ICBEMP process will provide a better understanding of how habitat on federal lands will contribute to the long-term viability of salmon and steelhead in the Interior Columbia Basin.

The ICBEMP Supplemental Draft EIS will consider the decisions affecting the other "Hs" as reasonably foreseeable actions affecting salmon and steelhead in the Interior Columbia Basin. These other actions will be discussed in the cumulative effects portion of the document.

These initiatives are interconnected and complex. They attempt to address the multiple factors that contribute to salmon survival and decline. The decisions that will be made will greatly influence the social, economic, and environmental health of the region. Continued public involvement in crafting these important decisions is critical to their ultimate success.

GAO Reports on the Interior Columbia Basin

Forest management is improving according to a May General Accounting Office (GAO) report. Members of Congress requested the GAO examine how the Northwest Forest Plan and the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project are addressing long-standing challenges in federal land use planning. GAO's findings include:

- federal interagency coordination has improved;
- opportunities for public involvement have improved;
- scientific assessments have generated better environmental and socioeconomic data for better management decisions; and
- monitoring continues to guide sound management.

The GAO report concluded that these plans solve many of the long-standing deficiencies of past planning processes that have contributed to delays, increased costs, and unmet obligations.

The GAO report praised the plans for including other federal agencies. The public has expressed its desire to become more involved in federal land management decision-making. The GAO report highlights that the "public has had many opportunities to participate in the development of a plan to manage federal lands." The

report goes on to mention the more than 200 meetings, briefings and consultations held to keep the public informed and that the draft environmental impact statement received over 83,000 comments during the 330-day comment period.

The report notes that the ICBEMP has taken longer and at a higher cost than originally expected. To date, the ICBEMP has taken two-and-a-half years longer and cost \$10 million more than originally expected. GAO cites two reasons for the increased time and costs. One, the agencies underestimated the time and effort required to address the ecological diversity and broad array of land management issues that exist in the interior Columbia River basin. Two, additional delays and costs are being incurred because the agencies are developing a supplemental draft environmental impact statement in response to public and congressional criticism of the draft EIS issued in June 1997.

The report concludes that "without the sense of urgency that focused efforts to develop the Northwest Forest Plan, they have not demonstrated the discipline and accountability for time and costs needed to produce a timely decision on the management of a large and complex region."

President Directs Protection of Roadless Areas

President Clinton on October 13, 1999, directed the Forest Service to develop regulations to provide appropriate long-term protection for most or all of the currently inventoried roadless areas. This proposal could potentially affect over 40 million acres of inventoried roadless areas on 155 National Forests and 20 grasslands nationwide.

The President's charge requires the Forest Service to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS will analyze the effects of eliminating road construction in the roadless areas. In addition, the Forest Service is to determine whether such protection is warranted for any smaller "roadless" areas not yet inventoried.

On October 19, 1999, the Forest Service issued a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement as the first step toward implementing President Clinton's direction. The notice of intent, published in the Federal

Register (Vol. 64, Number 201, pages 56306-56307), begins the public process. The public has until December 20, 1999, to comment on the proposed rulemaking.

Written comments on the proposed rulemaking should be sent to: USDA Forest Service-CAET, Attention: Roadless Areas NOI, P.O. Box 221090, Salt Lake City, UT 84122. Electronic mail comments may be sent to: roadless/wo_caet-slc@fs.fed.us. All comments will be part of the public record.

The ICBEMP SDEIS addresses the values of inventoried roadless lands relative to certain aquatic and terrestrial values; thus addressing a subset of the social and ecological values spoken to in the Notice of Intent. Appropriate and necessary coordination will be maintained as progress is made on completing both the ICBEMP EIS and the Forest Service roadless protection EIS.

New Regional Forester for Pacific Northwest

WASHINGTON, Sept. 15, 1999 — USDA Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck today named Harv Forsgren as Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest Region. In his new position, Forsgren will be responsible for guiding policy, budget, and land stewardship for the region's 22 National Forests and Grasslands totaling nearly 25 million acres in Oregon and Washington.

As Regional Forester, Forsgren will also sit on the Executive Steering Committee of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project.

Dombeck described Forsgren, a 21-year career Forest Service employee, as "the right man at the right time for the challenges ahead. His land ethic is great, and his professional reputation is without parallel. He has a wealth of experience in all aspects of forest and watershed management."

"My family and I are looking forward to returning to the Pacific Northwest. I am pleased that I will be leading an innovative and hardworking force of dedicated employees," Forsgren said.

Forsgren began his career with the Forest Service as a volunteer in Wyoming in 1975. He joined the agency permanently in Alaska in 1978 as a botanist classifying vegetation on the Chugach National Forest (NF). He has worked as a fisheries biologist in Idaho on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Sawtooth NF and on the Mt. Hood NF in Oregon.

He became fisheries program leader in the agency's Intermountain Region headquartered in Ogden, Utah, in 1988. He served as the National Fisheries Program Leader in Washington, D.C. Since June of 1998, Forsgren has been national Director for the Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plants staff.

Forsgren earned a bachelor of science degree in fisheries management from Utah State University and a master of science degree in natural resource management from Humboldt State University in California. He has had key leadership roles in the development of major conservation plans for anadromous fisheries in the Pacific Northwest and received recognition for his work in management of riparian areas.

Forsgren's experience and background means he will not be a stranger to the issues being addressed in the ICBEMP Supplemental Draft EIS. During his tenure in Washington, D.C., Forsgren played an instrumental role in the development of the PACFISH interim strategy for anadromous fish on Forest Service and BLM lands. The PACFISH interim strategy will be replaced by the long-term strategy in ICBEMP.

Forsgren, 44, lives in Centerville, Va., with his wife Julie and their two daughters, Myrica, 17, and Hailey, 15.

Proposed Planning Regulations

The Forest Service has issued proposed regulations to guide future land use planning efforts on the 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands across the nation. The proposed rule is available for public comment until January 4, 2000.

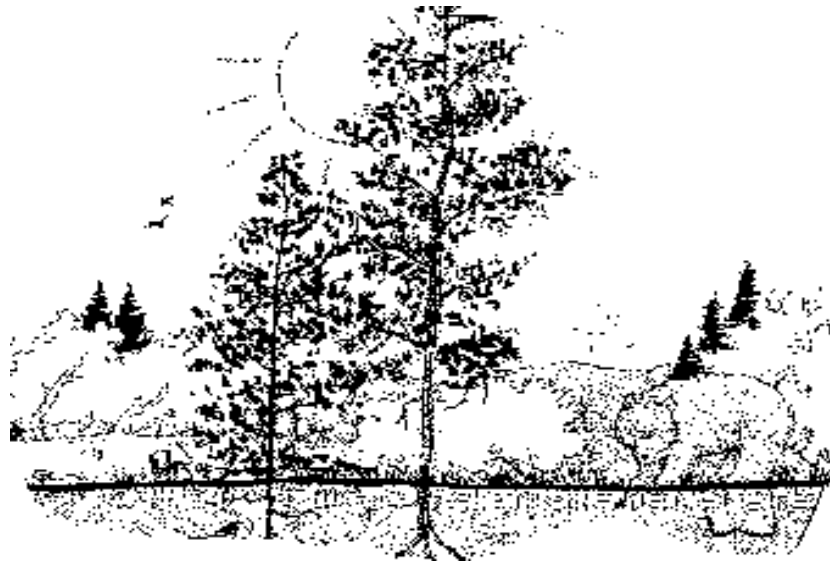
The proposed regulation is based upon a report prepared for the Secretary of Agriculture by a Committee of Scientists, which he commissioned to review existing forest planning efforts. The Committee held a series of meetings across the country and drew many of their recommendations from public input and the agency's own success stories.

Under the proposed rule, planning efforts already underway (like ICBEMP) will be exempt from the new requirements.

There are many planning concepts and practices included in the proposed rule which have been part of the ICBEMP planning effort. The use of scientific information and science consistency checks, collaboration with other governments and the public, and landscape assessments are a few of the new components of the proposed rule which have been put to use by ICBEMP experience.

Written comments will be accepted during the comment period and can be mailed to USDA FS-CAET, Att. Planning Rule, 200 E. Broadway, Room 103, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807. Comments can be faxed to 406-329-3021. People can also e-mail their comments to: planreg/wo_caet@fs.fed.us

Budget Bill Includes Direction for ICBEMP



The Federal Fiscal Year 2000 appropriations legislation contains direction on the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. Both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate versions of the legislation contain special language regarding ICBEMP, with only slight differences. The language in each version calls for completion of a report to Congress directed in section 323(a) in the FY 1998 appropriations bill. This report was never completed because the Project did not move to a Final EIS and ROD in the past two years.

The text of the FY 2000 Appropriations Bill Language reads as follows:

“SEC. 335. The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior shall:

(a) prepare the report required of them by section 323(a) of the Fiscal year 1998 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (Public Law 105-883; 111 Stat. 1543, 1596-7);

(b) make the report available for public comment for a minimum of 120 days; and

(c) include detailed responses to the public comment in any final environmental impact statement associated with the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Project.”

The FY 1998 Appropriations Act language in Section 323 (a) requires the Secretary of Agriculture

and the Secretary of the Interior to submit to the Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report that addresses four major topics.

First, the report is to include a description of all land and resource management decisions to be made, by type and the official responsible, and the procedures for such decision to be undertaken to implement actions in the Project area that are consistent with the final EISs.

Second, there is to be a detailed estimation of the time and cost to accomplish each decision described in the paragraph above, (1), from the date of initiation of preparations for, to the date of publication or announcement of, the decision, including a detailed statement of the source of funds for each such decision and any reprogramming in fiscal year 1998.

Third, the report will contain estimated production of goods and services from each unit of the Federal lands for the first five years during the course of the decision making described above, beginning with the date of publication of the applicable final EIS.

Finally, if the requirements described in the first three portions of the report cannot be accomplished with current levels of appropriations, adjusted only for inflation, in subsequent fiscal years and without any reprogramming of such appropriations, Then the report will provide a detailed description of the decision making process that will be used to establish priorities in accordance with such appropriations.

Walla Walla Office Moving

The Project's Walla Walla office will be moving before the end of the calendar year to take advantages of staff downsizing. In December the ICBEMP staff will be housed in the same office building as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District office, at 201 North 3rd Avenue, Walla Walla, WA 99362. This move will reduce Project costs for Fiscal Year 2000.

Got an Opinion?

We would like to add a new feature to our newsletter called "Letters to the Editor". We welcome letters of up to 150 words on the Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project. You may mail your letters to, Letters to the Editor; 304 N. 8th, Rm 250; Boise, Idaho 83702. Letters may also be faxed to (208) 334-1769 or e-mail at ledge/r4_icbemp@fs.fed.us. Letters will be published as space permits.

For verification purposes, please sign your letters and include your mailing address and a daytime telephone number.

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To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or the Secretary of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240.

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