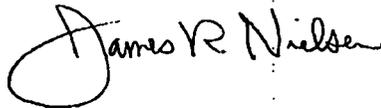


SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #2000-33

The following State and Federal Salmon Managers have participated in the preparation and support of this SOR: Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

TO: Brigadier General Strock COE-NPD
William Branch COE-Water Management
Cindy Henriksen COE-RCC
Doug Arndt COE-P
Col. Randall J. Butler COE-Portland District
Lieut. Col. W.E. Bulen, Jr. COE-Walla Walla District
J. William McDonald USBR-Boise Regional Director
Judith Johansen BPA-Administrator
Greg Delwiche BPA-PG-5



FROM: Jim Nielsen, Chairperson, Salmon Managers

DATE: November 8, 2000

SUBJECT: Ives Pierce Islands Spawning areas – Flows at Bonneville Dam

SPECIFICATIONS:

- Immediately increase instantaneous flows to 140 kcfs.
- On November 15, increase Bonneville Dam instantaneous flows to 150 kcfs.
- Maintain instantaneous flows at Bonneville Dam of 150 kcfs through November 30.

JUSTIFICATION:

Historical data and current field survey data indicate that chum salmon spawning is being negatively impacted by the present operation of the federal hydrosystem and Bonneville Dam specifically. Spawning surveys continue to be conducted throughout the lower Columbia River. Surveys indicate that the present operation of the federal hydrosystem is limiting chum salmon habitat availability in the Ives Pierce islands channel, Hamilton Creek, and the I-205 mainstem springs seep area, and the mainstem Columbia River at the confluence of St. Cloud Creek (one mile upstream of the I-205 bridge on the Washington shore). At current mainstem flows access to Hamilton Creek is not possible. The mainstem spring/seep areas near the I-205 bridge are inaccessible. Chum salmon are attempting to spawn in the undesirable areas along the Washington shore near the mouth of Hamilton Creek. The chum observed by field crews are physically stressed, exhibiting extensive fin and tail erosion.

Grays River chum counts are indicating the chum run may be early this year. We are extremely concerned that the federal operators are not recognizing the potentially critical situation for chum salmon. When tributary streams are running lower than normal during the chum salmon spawning season, the natural survival strategy available is mainstem spawning.

However, the federal parties are compounding the negative impact on chum salmon by not providing more than a small fraction of the potential chum spawning habitat at the Ives/Pierce channel area. The apparent strategy of the federal parties of not providing mainstem flows prior to an increase in tributary flows, is compounding the bad situation and is eliminating what is a natural diversity in survival strategies under low tributary flows. The mainstem Ives/Pierce channel area is more important under low tributary flow conditions such as are occurring now. Continuing this operation is forcing chum into unsuitable areas. In addition, the low flows at Bonneville are impacting other mainstem chum salmon spawning areas further downstream, thus further limiting diversity of survival strategies for listed chum salmon.

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