



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 1100
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-1274

January 24, 2017

Idaho Department of Water Resources
ATTN: Jean Hersley, Technical Records Specialist II
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720

RECEIVED
JAN 26 2017
DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

Re: Comments on Water Right Permit Application #74-16060

Dear Ms. Hersley:

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff have reviewed the above referenced water right permit application and supporting documents. We believe that approval of the proposed water right would adversely affect NMFS' trust resources (i.e., Snake River Basin steelhead and Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon). Because NMFS' trust resources are also public resources, we feel that approval of the application is not in the public's interest. We urge you to carefully consider the concerns outlined below before making your decision regarding this application.

Water right 74-16060, if issued, would increase water use in the Lemhi River drainage which would reduce flow in the lower Lemhi River. Water diversion and use has reduced flow throughout the Lemhi River drainage and flow is a limiting factor for the Lemhi River populations of Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon (Chinook salmon) and Snake River basin steelhead (steelhead) populations. Reducing flow the lower Lemhi River would harm Chinook salmon, steelhead, and designated critical habitat for both species.

Improving streamflow in the Lemhi River is a high priority for recovery of the Lemhi River Chinook salmon and steelhead populations. Collaborative efforts among private landowners, state agencies, and Federal agencies have improved flow in Chinook salmon and steelhead habitat, with demonstrable positive effects on anadromous salmonids. Protecting and enhancing Lemhi River Chinook salmon, steelhead, and critical habitat is in the public interest, as evidenced by the substantial collaborative efforts directed toward salmonid habitat restoration. NMFS feels that approval of water right application 74-16060 without provisions to protect fishes and their habitat, would reduce value of completed habitat restoration and would likely impair future restoration efforts.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Tehan
Assistant Regional Administrator

