



IN REPLY  
REFER TO:

SRA-1200  
WTR-1.10

## United States Department of the Interior

### BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Pacific Northwest Region  
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100  
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

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Department of Water Resources

Honorable Dirk Kempthorne  
Governor of Idaho  
Boise, Idaho 83720-0034

Mr. Robert Lohn, Regional Director  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
7600 Sand Point Way NE  
Seattle, Washington 98115

Subject: Cascade Salmon Flow Augmentation Water Releases

Dear Governor Kempthorne and Mr. Lohn:

For the past several years Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and Idaho Power Company (IPC) have been involved in a water shaping agreement, which allowed Reclamation to maintain a somewhat higher summer pool at Lake Cascade, by releasing salmon water under a 60/40 split flow scenario. The agreement allowed for 60% of the salmon flow augmentation water to be released in the spring/summer from the Payette system with IPC picking up the 40% out of Brownlee Reservoir. This allowed for 40% to stay in Lake Cascade over the summer and released in the fall/winter time period for IPC use. The water shaping agreement between BPA and IPC has expired and without a new agreement, Reclamation has no mechanism to continue to provide the higher pool level and associated water quality and fishery protection provided by the split flow scenario.

Without the shaping agreement, the local community has expressed concern that Reclamation will release all the salmon flow augmentation water by the end of August, which they feel will contribute to water quality problems in the lake. Lake Cascade is a shallow reservoir and experiences water quality problems primarily due to the combination of high phosphorus loads from the upstream watershed and the shallow depth of the reservoir. Secondary factors which may influence water quality conditions, on a year to year basis, include annual runoff, antecedent conditions, summer temperatures, operational levels, and water exchange rates. The split flow scenario allows Reclamation to hold 40,000 - 50,000 acre feet (kaf) more water in Lake Cascade during the hot months of July, August, and September. This water contributes to improved water quality and fish habitat.

At the request of the State and local communities, we have looked for alternative solutions that allow Reclamation to operate in a split flow scenario while still meeting flow augmentation objectives. With assistance from the State and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), we have developed a draft proposal for a split flow regime for flow augmentation releases from Lake Cascade for the 2002 operation season that does not require participation by IPC or BPA.

Reclamation's flow augmentation objectives for 2002 are for 160 kaf of flow augmentation water to be released from the Payette system. Reclamation will release 110 kaf from uncontracted space with the remaining water coming from willing sellers in the rental pool (we estimate approximately 50 kaf will be available this year).

Of the 160 kaf flow augmentation releases from the Payette system, 120 kaf will be released by the end of August. The remaining 40 kaf will be held in Lake Cascade over the winter and released in April of 2003. This flow scenario allows the elevation in Lake Cascade to be approximately two feet higher at the end of August than it otherwise would be, and may provide incremental benefits to water quality.

It is our understanding that, under their licensing agreement with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, IPC has the legal right to store water provided from the Upper Snake River Basin, including the water released from our projects and to release that water in to the Lower Snake River according to power needs. Absent a shaping agreement, the 40 kaf identified above could possibly be stored in Brownlee reservoir and released in the fall or winter season as needed for power production. Thus, if we release the 40 kaf during this summer's flow augmentation season, it may not result in any actual benefit to salmon in the Lower Snake River during this season.

We are advised by NMFS that releases of the 40 kaf next spring will likely result in benefits to 2003 juvenile migrants by causing outflow from Brownlee to increase earlier and continue at higher levels longer. It appears that in the absence of a shaping agreement for this year the greatest benefits for fish could occur if this water is held over the winter and released in the spring.

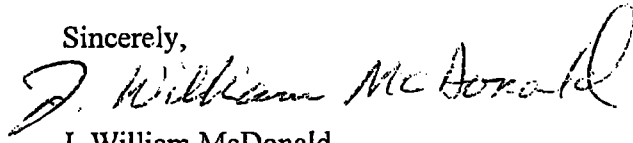
Releases in April 2003 will be accounted as 2002 flow augmentation releases and will not count toward 2003 flow augmentation objectives. It is not expected that the 40 kaf evacuated in the spring will make a difference on the refill probability of the system relative to releases the previous summer. In an above average year, there may be a risk that the 40 kaf may be released early, as part of a larger flood control release. NMFS acknowledges and accepts this risk.

This proposal will require that Reclamation be given a temporary exemption from the Water District 65 water bank rules, which require Reclamation to evacuate all prior water bank water by March 2003. We cannot proceed without this waiver and we request State assistance in obtaining it. We also request State assistance in presenting this proposal to, and gaining the support of, the Cascade water users and other interested parties.

Reclamation considers this proposal to be a temporary means of providing a higher summer pool at Lake Cascade this year in lieu of a IPC/BPA shaping agreement. We do not consider this to be precedent setting and wish to continue to work with you to find long term solutions to both the water quality issues at Lake Cascade and the shaping of flow augmentation water releases. We continue to believe that the most balanced use of Cascade Reservoir uncontracted storage is a sharing of water for reservoir and downstream resources, as reflected in our 1994 record of decision.

With the concurrence of the State and NMFS, Reclamation will implement the proposed operation. If you concur, please sign and return this letter by July 10, 2002. Feel free to contact me (208/334-1464) or Lesa Stark (208/334-1464) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



J. William McDonald  
Regional Director

Concur:

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Dirk Kempthorne, Governor  
State of Idaho

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Lohn, Regional Director  
National Marine Fisheries Services

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

cc:  Mr. Karl Dreher, Director  
State of Idaho  
Department of Water Resources  
1301 North Orchard Street  
Boise, Idaho 83706

Mr. Steve West, Regional Director  
Department of Environmental Quality  
1445 North Orchard  
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Mr. Wayne VanCour, Chairman  
Cascade Reservoir Coordinating Council  
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