



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northwest Region
7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Bldg. 1
Seattle, WA 98115

F/NWR

September 9, 2004

RE: Comanager review of the Draft Revised 2000 Biological Opinion (BiOp) on the Operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System and 19 USBR Projects

Dear Comanagers,

As you know, NOAA Fisheries (NMFS) is revising its 2000 Biological Opinion (BiOp) on the operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) and 19 USBR projects, pursuant to the June 2, 2003 order by the U.S. District Court in Oregon in the matter of *NWF v. NMFS*. We are now seeking your comments on the Draft BiOp, which is posted on the Web at www.salmonrecovery.gov.

It is equally important for you to consider the Updated Proposed Action (UPA), prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bonneville Power Administration (the Action Agencies). Our Draft BiOp evaluates the UPA, which incorporates and updates the reasonable and prudent alternative of the 2000 BiOp to reflect adaptive management changes made since 2000 and to reflect the new analysis resulting from this remand and all scientific information now available. The UPA is also available on the above-referenced Web site.

NOAA Fisheries is obligated to use a final revised BiOp for the FCRPS and USBR projects by November 30, 2004. To ensure that NOAA's final BiOp is informed by the best available scientific and commercial information, NOAA Fisheries is soliciting information, comments, and suggestions. While we have attempted to provide the most complete draft possible, recent court decisions require us to leave some sections in the Draft BiOp incomplete while we consider the most recent judicial interpretations of relevant law. Nevertheless, we welcome comments on all aspects of the BiOp, including these incomplete sections. Comments specific to the UPA should be addressed to the Action Agencies directly.

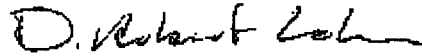
In order to have enough time to fully consider your written comments on the Draft BiOp, NOAA Fisheries must receive them no later than October 8, 2004. You can submit written comments to:

Joyce Howard
NOAA Fisheries
525 NE Oregon Street, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97232
Joyce.Howard@noaa.gov



We have scheduled a number of briefings and meetings to facilitate your review of our Draft BiOp. For information about those meetings and briefings, or if you have questions, please visit the www.salmonrecovery.gov Web site or contact Katherine Cheney, NOAA Remand Outreach Coordinator, at 503-230-3473.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Robert Lohn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

D. Robert Lohn
Regional Administrator