



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181



In Reply Refer to:
FWS/R1/AES

AUG 17 2016

Rob Jones, Branch Chief
National Marine Fisheries Service
West Coast Region
1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97232-1274

Dear Mr. Jones:

This responds to your August 12, 2016, request for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) concurrence, pursuant to section 402.14(b)(1) of the implementing regulations for section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, that the National Marine Fisheries Service Funding of Columbia River Basin Hatchery Programs under the Mitchell Act is not likely to adversely affect the threatened bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), endangered Columbian white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*), threatened marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), threatened northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), threatened streaked horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris strigata*), and the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), and designated critical habitat for the bull trout, murrelet, and the spotted owl, and proposed critical habitat for the cuckoo. Your request was received on August 15, 2016. The biological assessment (BA), which was developed in close coordination with the Service, for the subject action was electronically mailed to the Service on August 8, 2016.

Based on Service participation in the preparation of the BA and our review of the final version, we acknowledge that its content relies on best available information and the analyses contained therein are transparent, well-reasoned, and support NLAA determinations. The BA is herein incorporated by reference (National Marine Fisheries Service 2016) as the analytical basis for our concurrence that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the above listed species and critical habitat.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Eric Hein at (503) 231-2013.

Sincerely,

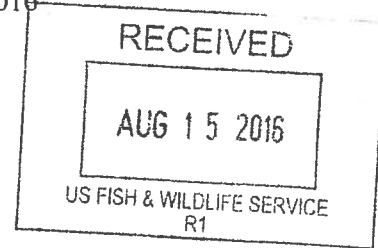
Assistant Regional Director
Ecological Services



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

August 12, 2016

Rollie White
Assistant Regional Director – Ecological Services
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Pacific Region
911 NE 11th Ave.
Portland, OR 97232



Dear Mr. White:

Through this letter, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is requesting informal consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (Act) on its proposed implementation of the Preferred Alternative from the Mitchell Act Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS¹) and the continued funding of Mitchell Act hatchery programs in the Columbia River basin.

NMFS annually distributes funds, appropriated by Congress, for hatchery operations under the Mitchell Act (MA) (16 USC 755-757) in the Columbia River basin through a series of grants to States and Tribes, and through an annual Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These funds are used to cover costs associated with the operation and maintenance (O&M) of hatchery programs and facilities as well as hatchery program monitoring, evaluation, and hatchery reform (MER) activities.

In September of 2014, NMFS published an FEIS on the operation of Columbia River hatchery programs, with the objective of guiding the future distribution of funding for MA hatchery programs. The FEIS analyzed the likely effects on the human environment of hatchery operations in the Columbia River basin across a series of policy directions (alternatives) aimed at reducing or minimizing the adverse impacts of these hatchery operations on natural-origin salmon and steelhead populations. The FEIS includes a Preferred Alternative (policy direction) that NMFS intends to use to guide MA hatchery-funding decisions into the future.

Guided by the Preferred Alternative (policy direction), NMFS intends on continuing to distribute funds appropriated by Congress for hatchery production throughout the Columbia River basin, including the currently-funded programs described in our Biological Assessment (submitted prior). However, where necessary, the operations of these facilities, and the individual hatchery programs at the facilities, will move into alignment, as appropriate, with the goals and principles of the Preferred Alternative as described and analyzed in the FEIS (Section 2.5 Alternatives Analyzed in Detail).

Pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the ESA, we are requesting that you concur that our proposed action is not likely to adversely affect (NLAA) ESA-listed Columbia River bull trout, Columbia white-tailed deer, Marbled murrelet, Northern spotted owl, streaked horned lark, or yellow-billed

cuckoo, nor would it likely adversely affect designated Columbia River bull trout, marbled murrelet, Northern spotted owl, streaked horned lark, or yellow-billed cuckoo critical habitat within the action area.

If there is any other information you need, please contact James Dixon in our Lacey, Washington, office at (360) 534-9329.

Sincerely,



Rob Jones
Branch Chief
Anadromous Production and Inland Fisheries

cc: Daniel Brown, USFWS
Larry Salata, USFWS
Eric Hein, USFWS
James Dixon, NMFS

¹ Mitchell Act EIS, formally titled the Final Environmental Impact Statement to inform Columbia River Basin Hatchery Operations and the Funding of Mitchell Act Hatchery Programs, 2014.