

May 10, 2004

Judi Danielson, Chair
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

Subject: Support for and Approval of Walla Walla Subbasin Plan

Dear Chair Danielson,

The Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 32 Planning Unit for the Walla Walla Watershed was created under Washington State House Bill 2514 by the initiating governments of Walla Walla County, Columbia County, the City of Walla Walla and Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13. The WRIA 32 Walla Walla Watershed Planning Unit (WPU), in conjunction with the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council in Oregon, has been working since 2003 to develop the Walla Walla Subbasin Plan (WWSBP). This WWSBP has been prepared in cooperation and coordination with local farmers, governments, Tribal interests, land owners and regulatory agencies. The WWSBP addresses aquatic and terrestrial species and habitats within the bi-state Walla Walla watershed and the WPU has provided significant guidance throughout the process, from policy-level decisions to discussion of specific language.

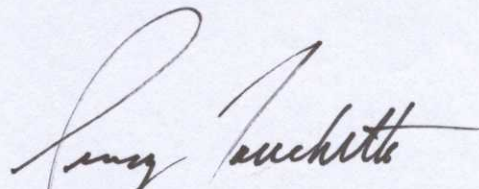
On May 4, 2004, the WPU conducted a final review of all comments received and incorporated many modifications into the Walla Walla Subbasin Plan. On this date, the WPU approved submittal of the plan to the WRIA 32 initiating governments for their approval and for further forwarding to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. The WWSBP represents a joint effort on behalf of local stakeholders to identify priorities for aquatic and terrestrial species habitat restoration and protection. These priorities are scientifically-based and take into account local opportunities and issues of concern. While we agree with the majority of information provided in the plan, areas of disagreement have been noted and will be addressed by ongoing discussions in the appropriate forum.

The WPU recommends approval of this plan as a vehicle for guiding the pursuit of Bonneville Power Administration project funding from the Northwest Power and Conservation Council for the next several years with the funding to be used for local enhancement efforts for aquatic and terrestrial species and habitats. The WPU recognizes that additional refinements and scientific understanding of many areas is needed, with new information and subsequent modifications and implementation over time may result in updated priorities and strategies. The WPU does not consider the WWSBP as the basin's Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance plan for listed species, but as an additional tool to inform the ESA compliance process that is being conducted through other planning efforts. The WPU looks forward to the opportunity for further refinement of the WWSBP and the benefits that will be achieved through its implementation.

Sincerely,



Hal Thomas
WRIA 32 Planning Unit Co-Chair



George Touchette
WRIA 32 Planning Unit Co-Chair