



May 21, 2004

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

Subject: Support for submission of the Walla Walla Subbasin Plan

Dear Judi Danielson:

The Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council (WWBWC) has been working for over a year with others involved in our subbasin to develop the Walla Walla Subbasin Plan. Council staff and board members provided significant guidance throughout the process, from policy-level decisions to discussion of specific language. A public review draft of the Walla Walla Subbasin Plan was distributed on April 12, 2004, with the public comment period closing on April 23, 2004. Public comments were made, however the Council Board has not had an opportunity to review all changes.

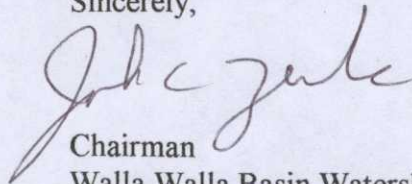
During our meeting on May 17, 2004, the WWBWC approved submittal of the Walla Walla Subbasin Plan to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. This plan represents a joint effort on behalf of local stakeholders to identify priorities for aquatic and terrestrial species habitat restoration and protection. These priorities are scientifically-based, take into account local opportunities, and attempt to balance issues of concern for various stakeholders.

The WWBWC is forwarding the Draft Walla Walla Subbasin Plan to the NWPCC to continue the public and ISRP review process through the summer, as coordinated by the NWPCC, with the expectation that the WWBWC will approve a final plan later this year. The WWBWC is not approving the plan at this time until a complete draft of the plan is available and there is sufficient time for public review and comment (at least 60 days). The approved plan will guide the submittal and evaluation of projects to be considered for Bonneville Power Administration project funding from the Northwest Power and Conservation Council for the next several years for enhancement in aquatic and terrestrial species and their habitats. It should be recognized that additional refinements and scientific understanding are needed. New information and plan implementation over time may result in updated priorities and strategies. Also, the WWBWC does not view this plan as the basin's Endangered Species Act (ESA) recovery plan for listed species

(aquatic or terrestrial), although it may be used to inform the ESA assurance process that is being conducted through a Bi-State HCP for steelhead and bull trout, and other planning efforts. The WWBWC looks forward to the opportunity for further refinement of the draft Walla Walla Subbasin Plan and the benefits that will be achieved through its implementation.

While the WWBWC agrees with the majority of information provided in the plan and its general direction regarding enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, we do have some concerns. We anticipate that these concerns will be addressed by ongoing discussions in the appropriate forum. We look forward to the opportunity for further refinement of the Walla Walla Subbasin Plan and the benefits that will be achieved through its implementation. This is the best attempt we could achieve in meeting the NWPCC criteria given our time and budget constraints. We appreciate the opportunity to be involved in this important process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John C. Zerk".

Chairman

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council