Ice Harbor Dam 2015 Avian Monitoring and Action Plan

Ice Harbor Dam utilizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) section for hazing of piscivorous birds to reduce predation on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed fish passing the dam. Bird hazing dates are April 1 to June 30. The hazing efforts are focused on gulls, terns, and cormorants observed to be feeding on passing fish. Land-based bird hazing is conducted 7 days per week, with a Wildlife Specialist present 8 hours per day from April 1 to April 11 and June 21 to June 30, and 16 hours per day from April 12 to June 20. Boat-based hazing is scheduled to occur 3 days per week from April 12 to April 25 and May 31 to June 20, and 5 days per week from April 26 to May 30.

Birds are actively hazed in the immediate forebay of the dam to the Boat Restrictive Zone. In the tailrace, birds are actively hazed from the immediate tailrace of the dam downstream to Eagle Island. Data that is noted are the time, avian zone, the species of the bird, number of birds, if they are foraging or not foraging, and control action taken.

Birds are hazed daily using propane cannons, bird distress calls, pyrotechnics, and lasers. In addition, there are bird wires across the turbine discharge area and the spillway area below the Dam. A water cannon is located on the juvenile fish bypass pipe terminus. Wire spikes are installed on light poles, forebay buoys, and other bird perching areas.

When a bird (gull or cormorant) becomes unresponsive to hazing and is leading other birds to feed on juvenile fish (instigator bird) who are also unresponsive to hazing, lethal take of the instigator bird or a bird in the group of unresponsive birds will occur at the discretion of the APHIS agent. This action will occur most sparingly after all other efforts have failed to move the birds. In the event that the total number of gulls, cormorants, and terns observed on a daily count increases to twice the average of the previous three season’s daily count of these birds for the same week, Corps of Engineers personnel will assist the APHIS agents in hazing.

Bird monitoring dates are April 1 to July 31. Gull, cormorant, Caspian tern, grebe, and pelican numbers are counted once per day, 6 or 7 days a week from April 1 to June 30, and 4 days (Monday through Thursday) a week from July 1 to July 31.

Bird observations will be reported weekly on the Project’s ESA Weekly Report, and will include a brief statement on the effectiveness of the bird deterrent program for that week. A summary of the season will be included in the Annual Fish Report.