MEMORANDUM

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Columbia River Coordination Section

Date: November 13, 2002

To: TMT

From: Ron Boyce

Subject: Comments on 10-22-02 Draft Fall/Winter Update of the 2003 Water Management Plan

Chum Spawning Flows- Oregon is not supportive of changing Biological Opinion requirements for chum spawning below Bonneville Dam and for access of chum into Hamilton and Hardy creeks. The Biological Opinion 125 kcfs minimum instantaneous flow target that results in a 11.5 ft minimum tailwater elevation to be started when chum are present no later than November 1 is supported by research collected over the last 4 years. Research also indicates substantial more spawning habitat would be available above 11.5 ft tailwater, so a 11.5 ft tailwater elevation to be provided no later than November 1 (which historically is when chum spawning is initiated) is a very conservative protection level to achieve some level of spawning in the mainstem by both chum and chinook. The Biological Opinion has already provided TMT substantial flexibility in modifying the RPA action for chum spawning including delaying implementation of the operation if poor hydrologic conditions indicate that the operation cannot be sustained throughout spawning and incubation and reduce flows if the operation conflicts with implementation of other RPA actions (ex: April 10 rule curve elevations).

Spring Creek Spill- The Fall/Winter Update should plan for implementation of special operations at Bonneville including the full 10 day spill to the 120% TDG gas cap to improve survival of the March release fish from Spring Creek NFH. Many of you recently received from Shane an excerpt from Larry LaVoy who described the importance of this stock to regional fisheries.

"Spring Creek Hatchery is a federal hatchery located on the Washington side of Columbia upsteam of Bonneville Dam near White Salmon River. I believe that Spring Creek NFH is the largest facility in the Columbia Basin in terms of numbers and pounds of salmon released. It provides 90+% of the production for the Bonneville Pool Hatchery (BPH) fall chinook management unit in the Columbia. BPH chinook is one of five major components of the Columbia fall chinook run. BPH along with Upriver Brights (URB) originate above Bonneville Dam along with a portion of Mid-Columbia Bright (MCB). Lower Columbia Hatchery (LRH),lower Columbia wild (LRW) and remainder of MCB come from below Bonneville Dam.

BPH chinook are a major contributor to Washington sport and troll fisheries due to their ocean range which is centered off Washington and extends partially into southern Vancouver Island waters. BPH was expected to comprise between 25-45% of the chinook catch off Washington during 2002 due in part to the very favorable forecast for this stock. Forecasted return to the Columbia mouth in 2002 was 136,000; actual return is in neighborhood of 160+K or about 23% of the entire Columbia River run. This is a near record run. Average BPH returns in the 1990's have been around 30K. Even at these abundance levels, BPH chinook contribute about 10-15% of Washington coast chinook catches. Spring Creek Hatchery along with LRH fall chinook are the backbone of Washington troll and sport fisheries.

Spring Creek Hatchery has always had a reputation for good survivals from fingerling type releases. Its my belief that these good survivals are directly linked to the facility itself, its water supply, location, and a few other intangibles. Additionally, its ability to operate and collect broodstock has minimal ESA complications and makes Spring Creek Hatchery a prime "harvest augmentation" facility without major listed fish recovery plan negatives. One couldnt simply move the production elsewhere and expect the same successess in adults produced or not experience major recovery plan headaches with other stocks. And in fact, Spring Creek Hatchery eggs have been transferred to lower Columbia facilities (Abernathy NFH and others) and have not achieved the same successes."

As you know, Spring Creek NFH also is the backbone of the popular Buoy 10 fishery in the lower Columbia that has only rebounded in recent years in large part because of BPH production that allows increased harvest of abundant hatchery and non listed chinook while complying with allowable impacts to ESA stocks.

Non spill management alternatives are not a viable option to providing spill until at least 2004. *U.S. v Oregon* parties are negotiating an agreement to relocate Spring Creek NFH production to lower river facilities to eliminate the March release; however the parties agreed that the earliest that the production can be reprogrammed is 2004 and only that can be accomplished if funding is secured. Given that, *U.S. v Oregon* parties have requested that spill be provided in March 2003 as requested by the Salmon Managers to not reduce survival of the Spring Creek NFH March release.

111202.1a