

SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: 2016-XX

TO:

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FROM: Kootenai Tribe of Idaho; Sue Ireland, Fish and Wildlife Department Director

DATE: May 4, 2016

SUBJECT: September through first week of November 2016 Libby Dam Outflow for Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Program, Bonners Ferry Island Project

SPECIFICATIONS:

Release 6,000 cfs or less from Libby Dam during September through the first week of November, 2016.

Provide gradually declining discharge to the target flow following ramping rate guidelines in the 2006 USFWS BiOp for bull trout and white sturgeon.

JUSTIFICATION:

Low flows in the Kootenai River during September through the first week of November, 2016 are requested to allow the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho's contractor to implement in-water work

associated with the Bonners Ferry Island Project during September through first week of November, 2016.

The purpose of restoration activities in the Bonners Ferry Islands project area is to: improve habitat conditions in the Kootenai River to help adult sturgeon migrate upstream, improve spawning habitat, increase juvenile rearing habitat, and improve overall ecosystem function. Project components include: creating deeper pools in the river by excavating areas on the river bottom; constructing bank structures to adjust water currents that will maintain pool features; developing and enhancing instream island surfaces; grading existing, eroding river banks; and planting native vegetation. The project will be constructed in two phases; the first of which was completed during fall 2015. The second phase of the project is scheduled for construction during 2016.

Instream aquatic habitat improvements scheduled for the Bonners Ferry Islands Project in 2016 include the excavation of one large pool (20-30 feet deep) in the channel bed at the location of an existing island and construction of two large, pool forming bank structures along the south side of the Kootenai River. During 2016, portions of the south bank within the project area will be graded to a gentler slope that supports native riparian trees and shrubs. The regraded bank will be stabilized with woody debris and rock at the lower end of the slope. The bank treatments will protect the restored bank, create additional floodplain areas, and provide habitat for important fish species.

The proposed operation will ensure Action Agency compliance with the USFWS Biological Opinion regarding the Effects of Libby Dam Operations on the Kootenai River White Sturgeon, Bull Trout, and Kootenai Sturgeon Critical Habitat (1901F0279R) as clarified (2008). Action 2.1 under RPA Component 2 (Management of Sturgeon Habitat) calls for Action Agency cooperation in implementing the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho's Kootenai River Restoration Project Master Plan.