Northwest Region
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Seattle, Washington 98115-0070

December 19, 1997   F/NW

Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Curtis, Jr.
Corps of Engineers. Walla Walla District
201 North Third Avenue
Walla Walla, Washington 99362-1876

Re: Informal Consultation. Bank Stabilization for Archaeological Site on the Columbia River

Dear Lt. Colonel Curtis:

This responds to your November 28. 1997. letter addressed to Elizabeth Holmes Gaar. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). requesting informal consultation for bank revetment work on the Columbia River in Kennewick. Benton County. Washington. Your letter was received in this office on December 4, 1997. In the November 28, 1997. letter the Corps of Engineers (Corps). determined that the subject action was not likely to adversely affect upper Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss gairdneri*) and Snake River fall chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). Upper Columbia River steelhead do occur in the proposed action area and were considered during this consultation. Adult Snake River fall chinook, which may occasionally stray into the action area during upstream migration, were also considered during this consultation. Critical habitat has not been designated for upper Columbia River steelhead. The proposed action area does not occur within designated critical habitat for Snake River fall chinook salmon. This consultation is undertaken pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and its implementing regulations, 50 CFR Part 402.

The purpose of the proposed action is to preserve a section of shoreline where the 9,200 year old ancient remains were discovered in 1996. A White House inquiry resulted in the formulation of an advisory group made up of representatives from the Department of Justice. Department of the Interior. and the Corps. This advisory group has requested that the Walla Walla District Corps stabilize roughly 350 feet of shoreline to preserve the archaeological site.

The proposed action would involve conducting 14 small test digs with hand tools within a 1,000-foot section of shoreline. Total excavation would be less than 9 cubic yards. After this is completed, approximately 350 feet of shoreline would be stabilized. Stabilization would incorporate riprap and bioengineering. Riprap would be placed with a helicopter and the interstitial spaces filled with soil. A layer of soil would be placed over the riprap and terraced. The terraces would be planted with willow, cottonwood, and red osier dogwood. The Corps would monitor the plantings to ensure survival (Linda Carter, pers. comm). All work would be conducted in December, 1997, and January of 1998.

Based on the available information, NMFS concurs with the Corps that the proposed action, as described, is not likely to adversely affect upper Columbia River steelhead. In summary, our conclusion is based on: (1) few, if any, upper Columbia River steelhead would be present in the immediate action area during the proposed work period, (2) Snake River fall chinook salmon would not be expected to be present in the action area during the proposed action, (3) the

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proposed action area serves as a migration corridor for upper Columbia River steelhead and does not provide spawning or important rearing habitat, and (4) there would very little disturbance to the aquatic environment.

This concludes informal consultation on this action in accordance with 50 CFR 402.14(B)(1). The Corps must reinitiate this ESA consultation if new information becomes available or circumstances occur that may affect listed species or their critical habitat to a manner or to an extent not previously considered, or a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the action. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Scott Carlon of my staff at (503) 231-2379.

Sincerely,
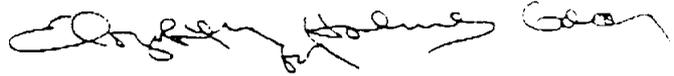
William Stelle, Jr.
Regional Administrator

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