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Subject: Comments on final draft report on linguistic data by Eugene Hunn dated January 26, 2000

CC: Frank McManamon, Jason Roberts

Dr. Hunn:

You are to be commended for a well-written report that has few typographical errors, which have been noted on the margins of the paper copy. The report is readable for non-specialists, which is a challenge when presenting most anthropological data. Dr. McManamon was particularly pleased that you addressed all of the comments that he made on January 5, 2000, to your preliminary draft report. The following comments to the final draft report should be viewed as observations on the arguments and analyses as presented. Recommendations for specific changes will be made in only a few instances.

**proto-Penutian dialects** (page 6, para 1): The argument in this paragraph depends heavily upon Greenberg's "controversial" approach to historical linguistics. Further discussion will be devoted to Greenberg's approach in a following section. The statement that it is "more than likely that Kennewick Man spoke a proto-Penutian dialect" is ultimately a speculative one. The argument for "continuity of occupation of the Columbia Basin habitat by means of exploitation of local resources, most notably salmon and roots" is not particularly supported by other anthropological data and should not be included in a report on historical linguistics. The archeological evidence, for example, suggests considerable evidence of population mobility and shifts in settlement patterns during Period I (11500-5000 BC)—which encompasses the occupation of Kennewick Man—and differences in subsistence patterns that are "significant" during Period II compared with the earlier Period I. (source: "Cultural Affiliation Study of the Kennewick Human Remains: Review of Archaeological Data" by Dr. Kenneth Ames, January 2000, pages 9-10) The profound and far-reaching assertion that Kennewick Man "is most likely culturally affiliated more closely with historic Sahaptin-speaking peoples of this region than with any other known Native American group" thus depends on an argument for occupation continuity that is not unequivocally supported by data from other sources.

**Interpretation of the meaning of *Laliik*** (page 6, para 2; also pages 18-19 and 20): The interpretation that *Laliik* reflects late Pleistocene floods is introduced on page 6 and repeated at the end of the report. Although very intriguing, the suggestion remains speculation. As you state on page 19, "a legendary flood is a very common theme of global mythology." It would be necessary, for example, to establish that humans were occupying the region at the time of the late glacial and post-glacial ice melting and flooding. The meager data relating to earliest human occupation on the southern Plateau do not at present support direct observation of the changing late Pleistocene environments by human inhabitants. Ames *et al.* (1998:103) argued that "while a Clovis presence is documented, it is unknown whether this culture had any bearing on subsequent cultural development in the Plateau region." (source: "Prehistory of the Southern Plateau" by Kenneth Ames, Don Dumond, Jerry Galm, and Rick Minor. In *Handbook of the North American Indians, Volume 12: Plateau*, pp. 103-119. Smithsonian Institution, 1998) Thus, it remains unclear whether such traditions would have passed down to historic inhabitants of the Plateau from the Clovis (or pre-Clovis) groups in the region.

**Greenberg's method** (pages 14 and 15): Your response to the initial query by Dr. McManamon was particularly appreciated. You have indicated that Greenberg's method is "highly controversial" and evidently does not enjoy widespread acceptance since "many historical linguists remain skeptical of Greenberg's claims." You do indicate that Greenberg's method is controversial but it seems that your argument for temporal continuity is derived primarily from Greenberg. The problem really is one of the difference between relative dating—i.e., stating that a language structure or vocabulary has been in place for a long time—and absolute dating, or the actual age of that structure or vocabulary. Can you determine that absolute age without reference to Greenberg's method? Greenberg's method should not be compared to that of radiometric dating, and the comparison on page 14 should be removed. Greenberg's method is not independently verifiable; radiometric determinations provide an absolute age determination that may be replicated and have "half lives" that are determined by the realities of chemistry and physics.

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**Culture core** (page 20, para 2): The statement that the culture of core of historic Sahaptian speakers might have been inherited from the group to which Kennewick Man belonged even if he spoke a non-Penutian language is an important statement that ultimately implies that language does not equal culture. However, it would seem possible to reverse the argument to contend that the culture core of Kennewick Man's group was not ancestral to that of historic Sahaptian speakers even if Kennewick Man spoke a proto-Penutian dialect. Unfortunately, we will most likely never know the answers to such questions.

**Possibilities and limitation of linguistic data:** The report presents arguments and interpretations with clarity and precision. It would be most helpful if you would include a section on the possibilities and limitations of interpretation of linguistic data, i.e., what one can and cannot with confidence conclude regarding cultural affiliation as defined in NAGPRA. These reports will ultimately be considered by Department of the Interior lawyers and administrators who will benefit from a clear statement of the level of confidence that an historical linguist has in conclusions based upon these data.