

***CHAPTER 12: UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER SPRING-RUN CHINOOK
AND STEELHEAD CONSERVATION MEASURES***

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The operation of the Project causes a reduction in water available for management of Columbia River flows during the months of April through June. Thus, Project operations under the New License could increase the magnitude, and possibly the frequency, that the Columbia River target flows established under the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion are missed.¹

In 1997, NOAA Fisheries established the goal of zero net impact for federal actions that would result in the reduction of Columbia or Snake river flows (NMFS 1997).² This “zero net impact” goal was further defined as pertaining to withdrawals only during the juvenile salmon migration season, and only when the established flow objectives for the protection of juvenile salmon were not being met.

SECTION 2: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND SCHEDULE

In accordance with this goal, the following mitigation action is intended to help offset potential adverse effects to the survival of Upper Columbia River spring-run chinook and Upper Columbia River steelhead by improving the frequency that base flows or minimum flows are attained in tributary areas that provide critical habitat for these species. In doing so, Chelan PUD does not concede that the reduction in Columbia River flows due to Project operations would have any biological significance, or that such mitigation action is necessary in order to achieve NOAA Fisheries’ goal of zero net impact.

The mitigation action will provide funding of \$20,000 per year for water conservation measures or acquisition of water rights that would be purchased or leased by either Chelan PUD or a third party, such as the Washington Water Trust. To assure that saved water or leased water rights are used for instream flows, the water rights will be administered under the Trust Water Rights program and water banking programs, which are administered by the Washington State Department of Ecology pursuant to Washington state law, or otherwise contractually bound to provide instream flows. The funds will be used only in situations where habitat for Upper Columbia River spring-run chinook and Upper Columbia River steelhead is adversely affected by low flow conditions.

¹ NOAA Fisheries, 2000. Endangered Species Act - Section 7 Consultation, Biological Opinion: Reinitiation of Consultation on Operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System, Including the Juvenile Fish Transportation Program, and 19 Bureau of Reclamation Projects in the Columbia Basin.

² NMFS, 1997. Letter from William W. Stelle, Jr., NMFS Regional Administrator, to Brig. General Robert H. Griffin, North Pacific Division Commander, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Re: Mitigation requirements for new water diversions that affect spring-run and summer flow objectives established to improve the mainstem survival of listed Snake River salmon.