



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Malheur  
National  
Forest

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File Code: 2200/2670

Date: October 14, 2011

Spencer Hovekamp  
Branch Chief  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
3502 Highway 30  
La Grande, OR 97850

Dear Spencer,

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended) and its implementing regulations on interagency cooperation (50 CFR 402), this letter and the enclosed eight biological assessments (BAs) initiate a request by the Malheur National Forest for formal consultation with the USDC NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the authorization of livestock grazing activities that “may affect, likely to adversely affect” Middle Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) (MCR steelhead) and its designated critical habitat.

We respectfully request a Biological Opinion (BiOp) or Letter of Concurrence (LOC) on the effects of the Malheur National Forest’s authorization of livestock grazing activities on MCR steelhead and its designated critical habitat. These eight final BAs include the following twenty-one grazing allotments on the Blue Mountain Ranger District:

Blue Mountain/Camp Creek/Long Creek;  
Dixie/Roundtop;  
Dark Canyon/Fawn Springs;  
Seneca/Deadhorse/Handscomb/Fields Peak;  
Indian Ridge/Deer/Donaldson;  
McClellan/Williams;  
Upper Middle Fork John Day/ Lower Middle Fork John Day/Slide; and  
York/Bear.

The permittees of the above mentioned allotments, with the exception of those associated with the Hamilton Allotment, are applicants as defined in 50 CFR 402.02, and will have up to 30 days to review the draft BiOp upon completion, inclusive of the 135-day consultation period.

We have submitted these BAs allowing for the required 135-day consultation period. As you are aware, the district court in ONDA v. Tidwell (D. Or. 07-1871) has ordered that this BiOp be completed by 3/1/2012. Every effort has been made to address concerns and comments you have made in earlier versions of the grazing BAs submitted to your office. We have incorporated those changes in the enclosed BAs to facilitate the consultation process.



If you have any questions, please contact Ian Reid, acting Malheur National Forest Threatened and Endangered Species Coordinator by telephone at 541-575-3363 or by email at [ireid@fs.fed.us](mailto:ireid@fs.fed.us). We look forward to working with you and your staff in the future to conserve threatened fish species and their habitat in the John Day Basin.

Sincerely,



TERESA RAAF  
Forest Supervisor

cc: John Gubel, Janet L Plocharsky, Ian Reid, Rene Mabe, Kim Kratz, Tom Hausmann