



File Code: 2670
Date: November 13, 2017

Dale Bambrick
Chief, Columbia Basin Branch
National Marine Fisheries Service
304 South Water Street #200
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Dear Dale,

The Forest Service (FS) received a verbal agreement on August 9, 2017, from the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) that the draft biological assessment (BA) on the revised Blue Mountains Forest Plans was complete and ready to submit for a final review. The FS delivered a draft BA in late August 2017 to the FWS and NMFS for their 30 day sufficiency review.

During the Services' review of the draft BA, concerns emerged from Cooperating Counties on the revised Plan's grazing guideline GM-3G. On October 16, 2017, discussions were held about guideline GM-3G between the FS, FWS, NMFS, cooperating counties (Wallowa, Union, Grant, Harney, Wheeler, Morrow, Columbia), and others (e.g., Representatives Walden and McMorris Rodgers, and Senators Wyden and Markley). On October 31, 2017, a subset of these entities again met and identified modifications to GM-3G for the FS to consider. The FS determined these changes are acceptable and should be considered in the ESA consultation, as these modifications are limited, and will continue to guide positive trends established by management under the Pacfish and Infish amendments, while ensuring continued, viable livestock use on the National Forests.

Therefore, please use the attached addendum to the BA to complete your review and finalize formal programmatic consultation on the Blue Mountain Plan revision. The information in the attached addendum provides a series of instructions related to modification of grazing guideline GM-3G.

- We request that your agency provide the FS a letter of sufficiency prior to December 12, 2017. This is the date in which we are scheduled to brief the Chief of the FS and the Department of Agriculture.
- Note that while we have provided updated information on the GM-3G guideline, and ask for your consultation on this slightly less protective guideline than was originally provided in the August draft BA for GM-3G, we ultimately will make a decision on the final GM-3G in the final ROD. If we choose to implement the slightly more protective GM-3G in future project actions, it's our understanding that this less impactful GM-3G will not necessitate reinitiation of consultation.

Sincerely,



THOMAS MONTOYA
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Bill Lind

