



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
West Coast Region  
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 1100  
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-1274

Refer to NMFS No.: WCR-2017-8438

December 6, 2017

Thomas Montoya  
Forest Supervisor  
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest  
1550 Dewey Avenue, Suite A  
Baker City, Oregon 97814

Re: Endangered Species Act Section 7 Formal Consultation and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for the Revised Blue Mountains Forest Plan in Northeast Oregon on the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests

Dear Mr. Montoya:

On November 13, 2017, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) received your letter of the same date transmitting an addendum to the biological assessment for the revised Blue Mountains Forest Plan, and seeking to initiate formal consultation pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act. Your addendum of November 13, 2017, amends and incorporates by reference the Final Biological Assessment for the Revised Blue Mountains National Forest Plan, which you submitted to NMFS on August 30, 2017.

This consultation pertains to potential effects of your proposed action on Snake River Basin steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Middle Columbia River steelhead (*O. mykiss*), Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*), and their designated critical habitats. This process will also serve as consultation on essential fish habitat pursuant to Section 305(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

We believe that the information accompanying your letter is sufficient to initiate consultation, and that any additional information we require is otherwise accessible for our consideration and reference. We have assigned NMFS number **WCR-2017-8438** to this consultation. Please refer to this number in any future correspondence regarding this consultation.

Section 7 of the ESA prescribes 90 calendar days for interagency consultation, plus 45 days to prepare NMFS's biological opinion (Opinion), unless we mutually agree to an extension. NMFS will strive to issue the final Opinion by March 28, 2018. We will keep you apprised of our progress.

As a reminder, the ESA requires that prior to completion of consultation, the action agency will not make any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would preclude any reasonable and prudent alternative to the proposed action that NMFS might require.

If you have any questions about this consultation, please contact Sarah Fesenmyer, Natural Resources Specialist, Southern Snake Branch at (208) 378-5660.

Sincerely,

  
Michael P. Tehan  
Assistant Regional Administrator

cc: S. Beverlin – MNF  
G. Masters – UNF  
K. Ramsey – UNF  
G. Miller – USFWS