



Department of Energy  
Bonneville Power Administration  
P.O. Box 3621  
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

MAY 13 1991

In reply refer to: **PGA**

**RELEASE OF THE SQUAWFISH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

To Interested Parties:

**ACTION:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is circulating a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Squawfish Management Program. A copy of the EA is enclosed for your review and comment. We will take comments until June 19, 1991.

**BACKGROUND:** As directed by the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act (Northwest Power Act), the Northwest Power Planning Council developed the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program. One Program goal is to double the present run of adult anadromous fish returning to the Columbia River Basin from the ocean from about 2.5 million adults to 5 million adults. Reducing mortality of juvenile salmonids as they pass downstream is considered essential to increasing adult production. The objective of this project is to reduce the number of squawfish that feed on juvenile salmonids by 10 to 20 percent and alter the age and size structure of the squawfish population. Based on computer modeling, sustained squawfish harvest and the resultant population restructuring may reduce losses of juvenile salmonids to predation by up to 50 percent within 5 to 10 years.

Squawfish are indigenous to the Columbia River Basin and live throughout the system. An adult squawfish can consume several juvenile salmonids per day, and account for approximately 80 percent of those lost to predators (in the John Day Reservoir). Squawfish are abundant in tailraces (the area below a dam), forebays (the area directly behind a dam), and reservoirs. If fewer squawfish existed in the system, juvenile salmonid losses would be expected to decrease.

The draft EA considers how populations of squawfish and other predators respond to harvest, how juvenile salmonids are selected as prey, and the methodology available to remove predators and protect juvenile salmonids from predators. Ultimately, juvenile fish survival and adult production would be the basis to determine success of the program.

**THE PROPOSAL:** BPA proposes to fund three types of fisheries to harvest squawfish. BPA also proposes to fund monitoring activities of these fisheries to determine if desired or undesirable results occur.

The three fisheries proposed are: (1) commercial Tribal fishing; (2) sport reward fishing; and (3) fishing from restricted areas of each dam (i.e., dam angling). These fisheries were tested successfully in 1990.

- Commercial fishing would be implemented by Tribal anglers in the area of the Columbia River from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam. This fishery would be restricted to Tribal anglers using long-lines as a gear type.
- In 1991, a sport reward fishery would be established from the Bonneville Dam tailrace to Hells Canyon Dam tailrace. This program would be open to all appropriately licensed anglers. Reward would be \$3 per squawfish. This reward amount could be increased in the future depending on participation. There would be at least two collection stations at each reservoir, one on each shoreline, with the exception of Little Goose Reservoir where there will be one station (as a result of limited access).
- Dam angling also would be implemented at all eight Federal lower Columbia and Snake River dams. This fishery would be restricted to technicians under subcontract with the fishery agencies and Tribes. The technicians would fish from restricted areas of each dam. Additional efforts to harvest squawfish from the restricted zones around dams may also be undertaken by State and Federal fishery agencies and Tribes.

**COMMENT DEADLINE:** The comment period on the EA will close on June 19, 1991. Please submit your written comments to the Public Involvement Manager, P.O. Box 12999, Portland, Oregon 97212, by 4 p.m., June 19, 1991.

**SCHEDULE A BRIEFING:** BPA staff is available to brief interested groups on the content of the EA, and to answer other questions on the project. Should you desire such a briefing, contact Mr. Bill Maslen or Ms. Kevin Ward at the numbers listed below no later than June 5, 1991.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Bill Maslen at (503) 230-5549 or Ms. Kevin Ward at (503) 230-5373. You may also contact Tom Dwonch at BPA's Snake River Area office in Walla Walla, (509) 522-6213; Rob Swedo at BPA's Upper Columbia Area office in Spokane, (509) 456-7601; or the Public Involvement office in Portland. Telephone numbers, voice/TTY, for the Public Involvement office are: (503) 230-3478 in Portland; toll free 800-452-8429 for Oregon outside Portland, and 800-547-6048 for Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, and California.

  
Nanci Tester  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Enclosure