

## **SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #2006-7**

*The following State, Federal, and Tribal Salmon Managers have participated in the preparation and support this SOR: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, NOAA Fisheries, Nez Perce Tribe, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.*

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**FROM:** Russ Kiefer, Chairperson, Salmon Managers

**DATE:** October 31, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Tailwater elevation at Bonneville Dam to protect natural spawning of chum and fall Chinook salmon at the Ives/Pierce Island Complex, Multnomah Falls, and partly influence the I-205 seeps.

**SPECIFICATIONS:** Provide a minimum instantaneous tailrace elevation of 11.5 feet at Bonneville Dam when chum are present (as required by the 2004 NMFS Biological Opinion), but not later than November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006 and continue until further notice. On average it is anticipated that daily average flow requirements for this operation will not exceed 125 Kcfs. This request is similar to what has been requested over the last five years.

**JUSTIFICATION:** The Ives/Pierce Islands Complex below Bonneville Dam represents a limited natural spawning area for ESA listed Columbia River chum and unlisted Lower Columbia River bright fall Chinook. The NMFS 2004 Biological Opinion (BiOp) recognizes that access to spawning habitat in the Ives/Pierce area and Hardy and Hamilton creeks is primarily a function of the water surface elevation. More so, the BiOp and experience over the last six years recognizes that managing water levels to a tailwater gage height rather than a flow level is preferable.

Over the last ten days hourly outflows at Bonneville Dam have varied between 72.8 and 159.4 Kcfs, with hourly project tailwater elevations fluctuating between 6.7 and 13.2 feet. These variable flows and tailwater elevations are not consistently adequate to provide spawning area

for chum salmon at the Ives/Pierce Islands Complex and Multnomah Falls. Additionally, these flows and tailwater elevations limit access to both Hardy and Hamilton creeks and spawning effectiveness at the I-205 seeps. The provision of a minimum 11.5-foot tailwater elevation at Bonneville Dam will provide access to a limited area of mainstem spawning habitat for chum salmon and allow unrestricted access to Hardy and Hamilton creeks.