

SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: 2011-04

TO: **BG John R. McMahon** **COE-NWD**
 Jim Barton **COE-Water Management**
 Doug Baus **COE-RCC**
 David Ponganis **COE-PDD**
 Colonel Bruce A. Estok **COE-Seattle District**
 J. William McDonald **USBR-Boise Regional Director**
 Steven Wright **BPA-Administrator**
 Steve Oliver **BPA-PG-5**

FROM: Kootenai Tribe of Idaho; Sue Ireland, Fish and Wildlife Department Director

DATE: August 2, 2011

SUBJECT: September / October 2011 Libby Dam Outflow for Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Project, Phase 1, Braided Reach

SPECIFICATIONS:

Release minimal outflow from Libby Dam during September (6,000 cfs minimum bull trout flow) and October (4,000 cfs minimum), 2011.

JUSTIFICATION:

- Minimum flows in the Kootenai River in September and October are requested to allow the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho's contractor to de-water two areas (channels) located in the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Project, Phase 1, Braided Reach 1 project area. The restoration strategy for this portion of the project is to stabilize eroding banks, trap sediment and promote floodplain development, increase riparian vegetation, and increase channel margin and side channel complexity. The Phase 1 effort will result in restoration of approximately 4,000 feet of river bank and will substantially reduce sediment loading that is contributing to degraded habitat conditions downstream.
- Provide gradually declining discharge to the target flow following ramping rates and minimum flow guidelines in the 2006 BiOp for bull trout and white sturgeon.
- The proposed operation is requested in order to implement the Tribe's Phase 1, Braided Reach 1 portion of the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Project. The proposed operation will also ensure action agency compliance with the USFWS Biological Opinion regarding the Effects of Libby Dam Operations on the

Kootenai River White Sturgeon, Bull Trout, and Kootenai Sturgeon Critical Habitat (1901F0279R) as clarified (2008). Action 2.1 under RPA Component 2 (Management of Sturgeon Habitat) calls for action agency cooperation in implementing the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho's Kootenai River Restoration Project Master Plan. If construction is not implemented by 2012, re-initiation of consultation will be triggered, interim river operations shall continue, and the action agencies shall evaluate the benefits to sturgeon associated with additional Kootenai River flows through the use of spill over Libby Dam pursuant to Action 1.5.