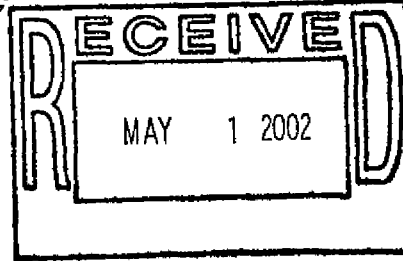




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April 30, 2002

Mr. Brian Brown, Federal Caucus Chair
National Marine Fisheries Service
525 NE Oregon St, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97232

Dear Mr. Brown,

SUBJECT: NRCS FY2001 Progress Report – Columbia Basin Salmon Recovery Strategy

Attached is the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) progress report for FY2001. NRCS is providing this report even though NRCS is neither an "action agency" for the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) biological opinion nor is it a "non-action agency", as NRCS was not signatory to the Federal Caucus memorandum of understanding (MOU).

This progress report represents accomplishments of private landowners. Technical assistance was provided by NRCS with our conservation partners using voluntary, incentive-based USDA farm programs as well as other state and local programs. NRCS and our conservation partners contribute toward recovery by addressing habitat needs when recommending conservation system alternatives to ranchers, farmers, and other private landowners/operators. All reported progress directly or indirectly contributed to salmon and steelhead recovery efforts by improving habitat and water quality within the Columbia Basin.

Please contact Rich Vigil (503-414-3210) if you have any questions about the report or NRCS continuing role in salmon recovery efforts.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Graham".

BOB GRAHAM
State Conservationist

cc.

Christine Pytel, Regional Conservationist, NRCS, Washington D.C.
Gus Hughbanks, State Conservationist, NRCS, Spokane, WA.
Richard Sims, State Conservationist, NRCS, Boise, ID.
David Kascht, Assistant State Conservationist, NRCS, Bozeman, MT
Frank Easter, Watershed Planning Team Leader, NRCS, Spokane, WA
Gary Pfieffe, Assistant State Conservationist, NRCS, Boise, ID
Jack Frost, Watersheds & Wetlands Division, NRCS, Washington D.C.

Columbia Basin Salmon Recovery Strategy FY 2001 Progress for NRCS

Key Message

NRCS progress is represented by natural resource conservation being voluntarily applied on the landscape by farmers, ranchers, Tribes and other private landowner/operators through a locally led, voluntary process. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance based on priorities established locally by Conservation Districts, Tribes and other conservation partners. Accomplishments are funded partially through conservation incentive programs (EQIP, WRP, WHIP, CRP, CREP, etc.) and by a major commitment of time, effort and money from private landowners, themselves.

- NRCS and its conservation partners assisted 4,200 farmers and ranchers implement natural resource conservation on 668,000 acres of private lands in FY2001 through a voluntary, locally led process.
- Every farm plan NRCS helps private landowners implement complies with ESA, CWA and other federal, state and local laws and regulations.
- During FY2001 NRCS provided \$21,241,000 dollars in agricultural incentives to private landowners through USDA programs (EQIP, WRP, WHIP and PL-566 Small Watersheds).

NRCS Progress by “All H” Strategy Habitat Actions

1. Tributary Habitat Funding-Non-governmental participation in planning and implementation of watershed solutions (Federal Habitat Team, NRCS).

NRCS informally participates with the Federal Caucus and Federal Habitat Team. NRCS also participates with NMFS, USFWS, EPA and the State in MOU whose objectives are to coordinate salmon recovery efforts and consultation processes. NRCS also participates with state agencies charged with implementing the State Plans for Salmon Recovery and Water Quality. At the local level NRCS staff participate with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Watershed Councils.

NRCS farm bill programs (EQIP, WHIP, WRP, etc.) are coordinated through interagency/ stakeholder work groups at the local level and a statewide technical committee. Program priorities are set based on environmental assessments and priorities established at the local and state level.

2. Restore Tributary Habitat- Provide permanent protection for riparian areas in agricultural areas by supplementing agricultural incentive programs (BPA, with FSA and NRCS).

Conservation Technical Assistance Program funds NRCS to provide technical assistance to land-users, communities, state and local government, Tribes, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation that reduce erosion, improve soil and water quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve air quality, improve pasture and range condition, reduce upstream flooding, and improve woodlands. Conservation plans developed for private landowners will improve overall watershed health when implemented thereby indirectly benefiting salmon and steelhead.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands and enables them to comply with Federal, State, and tribal environmental laws. Assistance is provided through geographic priority areas or statewide resource concerns designated by local work groups and a state technical committee, each with interagency/organization/stakeholder representation.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program provides financial incentives to develop habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands.

Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary program to restore wetlands on private lands through conservation easements and restoration cost-share agreements.

Total Accomplishments during FY2001 from implementation of CTA, EQIP, WHIP and WRP.

Accomplishments	FY2001			
	OR	WA	ID	Columbia Basin
Number of Customers Assisted with Resource Management Systems	1,304	2,351	578	4,233
Acres Planned with Resource Management Systems	245,351	132,313	27,167	404,831
Acres Applied to Resource Management Systems	362,842	278,186	26,956	667,984
Acres of Riparian Forest Buffers	2,152	942	168	3,262
Feet of Streambank Protection	1,810	1,250	6,945	10,005
Acres Treated with Erosion Control	214,412	266,395	28,269	509,076
Acres of Irrigation Water Management	11,291	20,388	1,170	32,849
Acres of Prescribed Grazing	267,237	30,526	19,497	317,260
Acres of Tree and Shrub Establishment	2,052	10,685	1,249	13,986
Acres of Wetland Created or Restored	3,506	10	32	3,548
Acres of Wildlife Habitat Management	114,827	178,175	8,881	301,883

Small Watershed Program (PL83-566) provides technical and financial assistance to Federal, State, and local agencies and tribal governments to protect watersheds from damage caused by erosion, floodwater, and sediment and to conserve and develop water and land resources. These projects directly or indirectly benefit salmon and steelhead and water quality. The following table lists those projects under implementation between 1997-2001.

Watershed Projects with Indirect Benefits to Columbia Salmon and Steelhead				
State	Watershed	Year Started	Year Finished	Description
Oregon	Buck Hollow	1994	On-going	Provided technical and financial assistance to install land treatment measures on private lands to improve water quality and habitat conditions for salmonids and other cold water species. Conservation practices also sustain the local economy and allow the local
	Lostine River	2002	On-going	
	South Fork John Day	2002	On-going	
Washington	Omak Creek	1995	On-going	
	Moxee Drain	1993	On-going	
	Ten Mile Creek	1994	On-going	
	Asotin Creek	1995	On-going	
	Tucannon River	1991	On-going	
	Pataha Creek	1997	On-going	
	Entiat River	1996	On-going	
	Salmon Creek	2000	On-going	
Idaho	Mission-Lapwai		On-going	

Conservation Reserve Program provides financial assistance to private landowners to voluntarily remove lands from agricultural production to protect highly erodible lands. Most of these lands are upland however their placement into permanent vegetative cover provides significant benefits for improving hydrologic conditions and water quality (sediment reduction) in streams with anadromous and resident fish. The USDA Farm Services Agency administers the program with technical assistance from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The *Conservation Reserve Program* has three components: Regular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), continuous conservation reserve program (CCRP) and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program/Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program provides financial assistance to private landowners to voluntarily remove lands from agricultural production to protect environmental sensitive areas. In Oregon and Washington CREP specifically targets riparian habitat restoration along anadromous fish streams. The USDA Farm Services Agency administers the program with technical assistance from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Conservation Reserve Program Accumulative Acres Enrolled through FY2001				
Program	Oregon	Washington	Idaho	Total
CRP (acres)	450,000	1,270,000	28,800	1,748,800
CCRP (acres)	4,300	74,200	800	79,300
CREP (acres)	5,000	3,300	-	8,300