

Commission staff included a draft environmental assessment (DEA) in the **Federal Register** with a comment

closing date of October 15, 2000. All comments are addressed in Attachment

B. Table 6.1–2 lists all of those who filed comments on the DEA.

TABLE 6.1–2.—LIST OF COMMENTORS ON DEA

Agency	Action	FERC project No.	Date filed
NMFS	Comments on DEA	P–935–037, P–2071–015, P–2111–011, P–2213–002.	Oct. 16, 2000.
USFS	Comments on DEA	P–935–037, P–2071–015, P–2111–011, P–2213–002.	Dec. 27, 2000.*
American Rivers	Comments on DEA	P–935–037, P–2071–015, P–2111–011, P–2213–002.	Oct. 16, 2000.

* Late Submission.

6.2 Consultation History

1995—PacifiCorp began working with the USFWS regarding the Yale Hydroelectric Project.

1998—PacifiCorp and Cowlitz PUD continued to work with the USFWS and began working with NMFS when the scope of analysis was expanded to include the remaining three hydroelectric projects on the North Fork Lewis River Watershed.

July 1999—PacifiCorp and Cowlitz PUD met with the USFWS, NMFS, and Commission staff to discuss habitat protection measures designed to protect and conserve salmon, steelhead and bull trout with the objective of obtaining authorization of incidental take under Section 7 of the ESA for the operations of the Lewis River Projects.

July 2000—On July 6th, PacifiCorp filed a draft single-party BA and application to amend the licenses for Merwin, Yale and Swift No. 1 Hydroelectric Projects.

August 2000—On August 16th, PacifiCorp and Cowlitz PUD jointly draft a BA for all four hydroelectric projects. PacifiCorp filed an amended application for amendment of PacifiCorp licenses and included a revised Exhibit E, a revised BA, and a revised EA. Cowlitz PUD filed an application to amend its license for the Swift No. 2 Hydroelectric Project.

October 2000—On October 4th, the Commission requested formal Section 7 consultation by letter to the NMFS and USFWS. The NMFS initiated consultation.

December 2000—On December 15th, the Commission sent additional information in a letter to the USFWS, per USFWS request. Commission staff noted that no other additional information was available. The USFWS initiated formal consultation on 27 December.

June 2002—On June 28th, NMFS and USFWS file their BO and its associated Incidental take statement. Formal consultation concluded.

Commission staff reviewed all comments received on the DEA (Attachment B). Below is a summary of and responses to the comments received.

The NMFS, USFS, and American Rivers submitted comments on the DEA. The NMFS and American Rivers also filed motions to intervene. All comments received are generally supportive of the proposed amendments in this Order. The USFS made numerous comments that extended beyond the scope of the proposed amendments.

The NMFS and American Rivers expressed concern that the DEA did not address, comprehensively, the impacts of ongoing operation of the Lewis River Projects on listed species but limited the scope to the specific measures contained in the amendment. The BA, which was included in the FEA, did address the impacts of ongoing operation on listed species to the extent it was known. However, as indicated earlier, the projects are undergoing the preparation of relicense applications. This effort will ultimately result in a comprehensive examination of project effects on listed species.

In addition, both NMFS and American Rivers expressed concern regarding the lack of details as to how the lands that are to be protected will be managed. As stated in the FEA and required in this order management activities will be consistent with the terms and conditions of the BO for each target species.

Finally, these entities expressed concern that, in the event that unforeseen circumstances cause the relicensing effort to become a protracted affair, the actions approved herein should have some time limits. Specifically their concern is that the protection measures may not afford the necessary protection for ongoing operation beyond the expiration of the existing licenses. There does exist the possibility, albeit remote, that

information will become available that indicates additional measures are required to address, as yet, unidentified effects to listed species associated with the ongoing operation of the subject projects. The ALP collaborative is in the process of undertaking studies or reviewing study results pursuant to the relicensing effort and it is possible that such efforts could reveal unidentified impacts. If this were to happen, then it is expected that Commission staff, in concert with the Licensee, NMFS, and USFWS, would undertake an effort to discuss the situation as appropriate.

7.0 Environmental Analysis

7.1 General Project Location

The North Fork Lewis River Basin (Lewis River Basin) lies on the flanks of the southern Cascade Mountains of Washington State. The river flows in a general southwesterly direction from its source on the slopes of Mount Adams to the Columbia River 19 miles downstream of Vancouver, Washington. The river is 93 miles long and has a total fall of 7,900 feet, the greater part of which is in the upper reaches. At its mouth and up to the Lewis River Hatchery, the river stage is influenced by tides and subsequent backflow from the Columbia River. The area of the drainage basin is 1,050 square miles; its mean elevation is 2,550 ft.-mean sea level (msl). Slopes in the upper portions of the basin are generally steep, resulting from the incision of numerous streams and rivers into the geologically young landscape. Most of the tributaries have natural barrier falls or are too precipitous for spawning (Chambers 1957; Kray 1957). Areas to the south of the Merwin Project and downstream along the river are less steep, represented by rolling hills and flat woodland bottomlands.

The basin has a complex geologic history, having undergone Tertiary volcanism, several glaciations, and interglacial erosion and deposition. Bedrock surrounding the project