**Department of Energy**

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

July 19, 2002

In reply refer to: KEC-4

**To: People Who May Be Interested in the Proposed South Fork Flathead Watershed/Westslope Cutthroat Trout Conservation Project in Montana**

Last fall the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) notified the public of our intentions to fund a project to remove exotic trout species from selected lakes in the South and Middle Forks of the Flathead drainages. BPA also stated that we intended to develop an Environmental Assessment (EA) as required by our National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations. This letter is to let you know that there have been some changes in both the scope and the name of the project as well as the type of NEPA analysis that will be developed.

**Updated proposal:** BPA is proposing to fund a project to remove exotic trout species from selected lakes in the South Fork of the Flathead drainage, some of which occur in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The purposes of this project would be to (1) preserve the genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout populations in the South Fork of the Flathead drainage; and (2) eliminate from headwater lakes, to the extent possible and in a timely manner, the exotic trout that threaten genetically pure stocks of westslope cutthroat.

This project was previously referred to as the Mountain Lakes Trout Restoration Project and proposed to treat lakes in the South and Middle Fork Flathead drainages, including some lakes in the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wildernesses. The proposal has been changed so that only treatment of lakes in the South Fork Drainage is being considered, and the name of the project has been changed accordingly.

Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) would conduct the activities associated with this project. The Flathead National Forest is a cooperating agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This project was recommended for funding under the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, as partial mitigation for Hungry Horse Dam hydroelectric operations.

**Environmental analysis:** After considering the complexities of the environmental issues presented by this project and the need to present more detail than would normally be required for an EA, BPA has determined that the level of NEPA documentation appropriate for this document would be an EIS rather than an EA.

**How to be involved:** You will be invited to provide comments about the project and provide information that you think should be covered in the EIS. This comment or "scoping" period will

be initiated in the fall of 2002. After scoping, we will prepare a Draft EIS on which you will also have the opportunity to comment.

**For more information:** If you need more information about the project, please call me at 503-230-5756, or toll free at 1-800 282-3713, or contact me at my e-mail address: caspiering@bpa.gov.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Nancy Weintraub for 7-18-2002*
Colleen Spiering
Environmental Project Manager