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Columbia River Crossing

State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFEMailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N • Olympia, WA 98501-1091 • (360) 902-2200, TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building • 1111 Washington Street SE • Olympia, WA

June 25, 2008

Columbia River Crossing
c/o Heather Gundersen
700 Washington Street, Suite 300
Vancouver, Washington 98660

Dear Ms. Gundersen:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Columbia River Crossing committees, and to review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Interstate Columbia River Crossing Project. The Columbia River Crossing presents complex issues and challenges for addressing transportation needs and the environmental impacts of the bridge. WSDOT has brought together diverse expertise, has worked conscientiously to develop solutions and a range of alternatives. Overall the work on this project and the DEIS is commendable.

WDFW through the InterCEP group has established early coordination through meetings and concurrence points. Your commitment to first avoid and then minimize unavoidable impacts to ecosystem, fish and wildlife is a high priority for WDFW hydraulic permitting. The DEIS is based on conceptual designs, therefore specific avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures will be further explored as this project develops and is closer to the actual permitting stage.

Recommended Preferred Alternative: From the perspective of providing the highest level of environmental protection for fish and wildlife WDFW is supportive of two of the proposed five alternatives:

Alternative 3: Replacement Crossing with Light Rail

Alternative 2: Replacement Crossing with Bus Rapid Transit.

Within each of these alternatives there is a "Stacked Transit/ Highway Bridge" option that would require only two new bridges. This design option is preferred by WDFW as the least environmentally damaging to fish life.

If there is additional information we can provide, please contact me at (360) 902-2575

Sincerely,

Teresa A. Eturaspe
WDFW Responsible Official
SEPA/NEPA Coordinatorcc: Tim Rymer, RHPM
Anne Friesz, RHPM