



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NORTHWESTERN DIVISION
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February 4, 2019

Mr. Michael Thabault
Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service
Mountain-Prairie Region
134 Union Blvd.
Lakewood, Colorado 80228

Dear Mr. Thabault,

Enclosed is the Fort Peck Adaptive Management Framework (Framework) which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) committed to completing in our letter of January 19, 2018, which formally amended the proposed action in the 2017 Biological Assessment for the Operation of the Missouri River Mainstem and Kansas River Reservoir systems, the Operation and Maintenance of the Bank Stabilization and Navigation Project, and Implementation of the Missouri River Recovery Management Plan. This amendment was the result of our two agencies identifying the need to accelerate consideration of hypotheses pertaining to recruitment of pallid sturgeon on the Missouri River between Fort Peck and Lake Sakakawea.

The Framework was developed using information in the Effects Analysis, information generated from the ongoing science activities on the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers, and ongoing discussions with the Missouri River Recovery implementation Committee. Specifically, the Framework addresses the Corps commitment to formulate test flows from Fort Peck, and describes the steps for their implementation and evaluation. In addition, in order to carryout test flows, the USACE is initiating a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to further refine the test hydrographs that are included in Section 2 of the Framework, to identify conditions when test flow releases would be achievable and beneficial, and to evaluate the impacts on the environment and the Missouri River Mainstem System authorized purposes.

It is important to note this Framework recognizes the importance of the Yellowstone River, including the fish passage project at Intake Dam, to the Upper Missouri River Basin pallid population. It is structured to be complementary to the Intake fish passage project to provide the best chance for meeting species objectives, considering the entire Upper Basin pallid sturgeon population as a whole.

As indicated in our January 2018 letter, we will also update the Missouri River Recovery Program's (MRRP) Science and Adaptive Management Plan (SAMP) to

include the Framework. Our detailed SAMP will be amended as needed to reflect the priority science activities identified in the Framework to ensure we maximize the learning opportunity afforded by test flow releases. Ongoing science efforts already include key components which will support formulation and evaluation of a test flow such as a maintained group of telemetered sturgeon, evaluations of telemetry capabilities including recommendations for refinement, ongoing monitoring efforts tracking sturgeon on both the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, ongoing evaluations of spawning habitat and spawning success, standardized monitoring of the pallid population, and modeling of sturgeon free embryo drift dynamics including a drift study in 2016. These efforts ensure we are well positioned to implement and evaluate a test flow when warranted.

We look forward to our continued partnership as we implement the Fort Peck Adaptive Management Framework.



David J. Pongaris, SES
Director, Programs