



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife
South Willamette Watershed District Office
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January 6, 2017

Robert Anderson
National Marine Fisheries Service
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97232

Dear Robert,

On June 28, 2016, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) re-issued a Letter of Authority (LOA) to the States of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho permitting the lethal removal of individually identifiable predatory California sea lions (CSL) in the vicinity of Bonneville Dam to minimize pinniped predation on threatened and endangered salmonids in the Columbia River. Per item number two in the Terms and Conditions of the new LOA the States were directed to provide NMFS with a report no later than March 1, 2017, that explains the additional safeguards that have been considered to ensure the reliable identification of individual CSL foraging for salmonids in the area. As you know, during field work in the spring of 2016 we observed that the “aging” of a brand mark on a sea lion can, on rare occasion, result in subtle changes to the appearance of the mark. The following is a description of the measures that we plan to take in the future in order to further minimize the unlikely event of misidentifying individual predatory CSL.

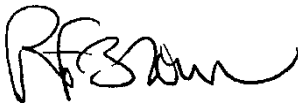
- 1) We intend to take digital photographs of the mark placed on each CSL immediately after the branding event, before the animal is released. Then, in subsequent years we will take additional photographs of the animal's brand when possible in order to monitor any changes in appearance that make occur.
- 2) In 2016, we installed automated camera systems on two of the CSL traps used at Bonneville Dam. We found this to be a useful tool for identification of individual CSL that were foraging in the area. In 2017 and beyond we intend to place a camera on every trap we operate at all locations in the Columbia River. In addition to providing information on use of the river by individual CSL, the photographs of brands on the animals will further add to the process of monitoring the individual brands over time.

- 3) In cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Fisheries Field Unit at Bonneville Dam, we will prepare a shared photographic catalogue of CSL eligible for removal. Referring to this catalogue will assist both Corps and State staff with animal identification.
- 4) Prior to any action that would result in permanent removal of a CSL from the Bonneville area, we intend to directly compare the brand on the animal in hand to the series of photographs of the same animal found in the catalogue.
- 5) If there is any remaining ambiguity surrounding the identity of the individual CSL, we will consult directly with Corps staff and request that they directly observe the animal.
- 6) No CSL will be permanently removed unless the States are convinced that the animal is of known identity and has been approved for removal under the most current list of predatory CSL.

If the States find additional ways to ensure the identification of individual CSL we will implement them as possible. We feel the additional safeguards outlined above will provide the greatest possible assurance that only those individual predatory CSL for which removal has been authorized will be removed from the Columbia River.

Thank you for your assistance and support for this effort to minimize the losses of threatened and endangered salmonids to predatory CSL in the Columbia River.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RF Brown', written in a cursive style.

Robin F. Brown
Marine Mammal Program Leader