

Traditional Cultural Properties
-FINAL REPORT-
-PUBLIC-

MASON DAM PROJECT
BAKER COUNTY, OREGON
Project Number P-12686



July 2009

TREATY JUNE 9, 1855 ♦ CAYUSE, UMATILLA AND WALLA WALLA TRIBES

Traditional Use Study for the Mason Dam Hydroelectric Project, Baker County, Oregon

Jennifer Karson Ph.D.
Cultural Resources Protection Program

Prepared for
Baker County

June 30, 2009



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Contract #378-008

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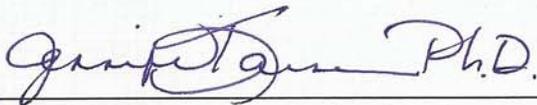
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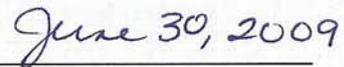
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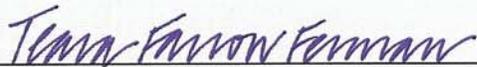
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Jennifer Karson, Ph.D., Cultural Anthropologist/Ethnographer



Date



Teara Farrow Ferman, Program Manager



Date

Summary and Recommendation

The Elkhorn Mountain Range and upper and lower segments of the Powder River Basin have been used by members of today's CTUIR since time immemorial. Tribal oral history details that use as well as routes and seasonal activity; indigenous place name data reveals natural and cultural resource information connected to the landscape and these sites are identified as Traditional Cultural Properties; the Indian Claims Commission Parcel C document lays claim as important traditional use areas to the CTUIR. Phillips Lake lies near the edge of the CTUIR ceded lands yet falls well within the usual and accustomed areas. The upper Powder and Burnt River Basins, while far from the reservation where people reside today, is an area for which many people still hold memories and knowledge and continue to pass this knowledge and information on to the next generation.

Today, Phillips Lake has altered the free flowing Powder River and it and other dams prevent an important resource, salmon, from being harvested in the tribe's ceded lands in a traditional fishery of the CTUIR. This hydroelectric project for Mason Dam will not harm these properties outright. However, this river basin is a physical connection to the tribe's past, to how the CTUIR lived before contact with non-Indian people and after contact with non-Indian people, and how they continue to use the landscape today. The physical and spiritual importance of the Phillips Lake area remains. This is a location where people traveled to for part of their subsistence, cultural endurance, and spiritual survival. Because the earth offered so much in the way of natural resources, this is a place the people promised to protect, and to obey *tamánwit* (the law).

This area was and continues to be of importance to the CTUIR. Descendants of those who used to travel to the region for subsistence purposes on a seasonal basis still return to accessible areas to pursue hunting, fishing, and gathering activities in the region. The core activities associated with the Phillips Lake region include fishing, hunting, habitation, gathering of obsidian resources, burial areas and physical and spiritual vision questing.

The CTUIR's culture and traditions are intertwined with each traditional use area informing the next and all of the areas are in turn linked to the natural environment by *tamánwit*. These areas are important to the CTUIR's traditional cultural and spiritual way of life. The impacts to the Powder River in the project area have already occurred and the consequences of this development have had an adverse effect to the Powder River and traditional use areas that are now under Philips Lake.

The CRPP's traditional use study of the project area found that several important historic properties of religious and cultural significance to the CTUIR are present near the proposed undertaking. The importance of these places to CTUIR cannot be overstated. The significance of these places continues today through the continued use, traditions, and stories that have been passed down through the generations. These locations are a physical link with the CTUIR and its history and religion. At various times, Indians have been excluded from participating in traditional cultural and spiritual practices, but these places are rooted in the Tribes' history and are important elements for perpetuating the CTUIR's ongoing cultural identity. CTUIR culture and the natural environment cannot be separated.

The Powder River Basin and its associated historic properties contribute to the CTUIR culture and are eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The construction and retrofit of the hydropower facility at Mason Dam should not adversely affect these sites. The proposed project will contribute to the cumulative effects to nearby traditional use areas and the future operations of the facility have the potential to affect some of these properties. The CTUIR looks forward to working with Baker County, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the Bureau of Reclamation in the future to avoid or minimize those effects.