



# THE LEADING EDGE

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*Newsletter of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project—  
Evaluating and implementing ecosystem management within the Interior Columbia River Basin.*

## Release of Draft Environmental Impact Statements Put on Hold

Since the end of May, the Project's Executive Steering Committee (ESC) (Forest Service Regional Foresters, Research Station Directors and BLM State Directors) has been working to select a preferred alternative from the seven developed in the two Draft Environmental Impact Statements (EISs). The ESC sought comments for the identification of a preferred alternative(s) through intergovernmental coordination with organizations exempt from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). They have asked county, state, and tribal governments, other federal agencies, resource advisory councils, and internal agency managers for their comments, concerns, and recommendations.

As a part of this process, on September 6, the ESC met with the federal regulatory agencies (the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service). The ESC discovered a difference of opinion among the federal regulatory agencies regarding the extent to which the alternatives satisfy federal legal requirements of the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act. There

is also some uncertainty among these agencies as to how the alternatives would be implemented with regard to these mandates.

One of the outcomes of this meeting was that the printing and release of both the Eastside and Upper Columbia River Basin Draft EISs has been put on hold until questions and concerns on legal issues, how implementation would occur, and on-the-ground impacts can be clarified. The ESC has also asked for additional work to be done to provide clarity in order to support the identification of a preferred alternative.

In order to respond to the input we have received from the federal regulatory agencies, as well as other groups and governmental entities exempt from FACA, agency executives have selected a group of senior staff from the federal land management and regulatory agencies to complete this

additional work quickly and to expedite some of the implementation planning. The goals of this executive working group are:



*"Indian tribes, like everyone else, are trying to find ways to*

*ensure the protection of our natural resources for future generations."*

RALPH PERKINS  
Tribal Liaison,  
Interior Columbia Basin  
Ecosystem Management Project

1) Further develop and detail the Implementation Plan and incorporate into the draft EISs. This will provide a better understanding of what the field level impacts and direction will be.

2) Sort through the seven alternatives in the Draft EISs to determine what direction may be contained elsewhere that meets the legal mandates of the regulatory agencies and clarifying what issues may still need to be resolved.

It is expected that this work should be complete within six weeks, at which time selection of a preferred alternative will proceed. The ESC expects completion of these processes as quickly as possible in order to print and release the draft EISs sometime this winter.



## Working Towards the Selection of a Preferred Alternative

Early this summer, an internal review of the two Draft Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) by the Executive Steering Committee (ESC) was completed in Portland, Oregon. In addition to the executives for the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, executives from the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service, also participated in this review.

Since the review meeting, the ESC and the Project Management Team have been conducting meetings throughout the project area to meet three objectives:

- 1) To make sure that field personnel have the opportunity to become better acquainted with the DEISs prior to the release.
- 2) To brief other governmental interests and facilitate intergovernmental coordination with those groups listed above that are exempt from FACA.
- 3) To seek advice from employees and other governmental interests on the identification of a preferred alternative.

Meetings have been scheduled and coordinated with representatives of 22 tribes, four state associations of counties, and other state and regional working committees. This additional input, while not common in a normal EIS process, continues the Project's efforts of an open public process.

The outcome of many of these meetings has been the realization that there needs to be a better understanding of how the direction in the draft EISs will be implemented at the field level. Virtually all of the consulted groups want to know more about how each alternative would be implemented, and what the on-the-ground impacts would be. The alternatives build on existing laws, policies and practices that are not repeated in the draft EIS documents. It is difficult to draw conclusions about implementation impacts without explicit understanding of this larger frame of reference.

The ESC will continue to consider the comments and concerns of all of the consulted groups. Once a preferred alternative is identified and the Draft EISs are released, the formal public comment period will begin. This is your opportunity to tell us what you like, what you don't like, what you feel needs to change, and what risks and associated outcomes you want to see in management of your public lands within the project area. Get involved and stay involved - your input will lead us to a more informed final decision document.

## New Project Homepage and Address

The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project has updated and obtained a new address for its homepage on the world wide web. Until recently the Project's homepage was located with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service homepage through the agency's Washington D.C. office. Although still linked to both the Forest Service and the United States Department of Interior (USDI) Bureau of Land Management homepages, the Project's new homepage address is: <http://www.icbemp.gov>

In anticipation of the release of the Project's Scientific Framework and Assessment documents and two Draft Environmental Impact Statements (DEISs), the new homepage allows for frequent and efficient updating of project information. The Project's electronic library will no longer be updated and will be disconnected at the end of October.

The homepage includes general project information, personnel information, past and current issues of newsletters and news releases, public meeting notes, information on project status, development and public involvement processes of the two DEISs. In addition, Science Integration Team reports, metadata, and available data lists and forms for ordering this information is included on the homepage network. For further information please contact Webmaster, John Zednick at the Walla Walla office of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project at 509-522-4030.



# Project Management Team Changes

The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project is moving into its final phase with the upcoming completion of the science products and the two draft environmental impact statements (DEISs) and continuing on to the final EISs and the Record(s) of Decision(s).

One major change is combining the two teams into one. However, the two offices, one in Walla Walla and the other in Boise, will remain open through the remainder of the project.

The Project Management Team has recently been reconfigured. The team consists of three Project Managers. Jeff Blackwood, who has headed the project in Walla Walla since the beginning, will be transitioning to a part-time role. Jeff will also return part-time to his duties as Forest Supervisor on the Umatilla National Forest. Steve Mealey, Project Co-Manager in Boise will continue in a full-time role. Linda Colville, BLM Project Manager, joined the team on August 16 as a full-time member also working in the Boise office. Linda comes to the project from the BLM Colorado State Office where she has been a Special Assistant to the State Director. Jeff, Steve, and Linda will work together to manage a single project team. Pat Geehan, Deputy Project Manager, will be returning to the BLM State Office in Portland.

Tom Quigley, Science Integration Team Leader will transition to a part-time role as Science Advisory Group Leader. The role of this group is to oversee the final publication of the main science products and work with the EIS Team in an advisory role as they work towards the final EIS(s). The members of the group will also act as technical advisors to the other project teams and management as decisions are being made. Group membership is similar to the Science Integration Team.

In addition, the Executive Steering Committee, has established an Implementation Planning Team, led by Rick Tholen, from the BLM State Office in Boise. This team will work directly for the Executive Steering Committee. Gary Wyke will serve as the liaison between the EIS Team and the Implementation Team. Wendell Hann, Landscape Ecologist, will work with the EIS Team, the Science Advisory Group, and the Implementation Team to develop a process of transferring the technology from the Project to the field.

Other changes on the project team include:

Final EIS Team:	Jeff Walter, Team Leader, Boise
	Cathy Humphrey, Deputy Team Leader, Walla Walla

Communications-Intergovernmental Team:	Andy Brunelle, Team Leader, Boise
	Rex Holloway, Deputy Team Leader, Walla Walla

Tribal Relations Team:	Ralph Perkins, Team Leader, Walla Walla
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Administration Team:	Cathy Weise, Team Leader, Walla Walla
	Deanna Mendiola, Deputy Team Leader, Boise

GIS Spatial Analysis Team:	Becky Gravenmier, Team Leader, Walla Walla.
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These team members will continue in their role until the final EISs and Records of Decision are released in 1997.



# Timeline Update

Release of Scientific Framework	October 1996
Release of Scientific Assessment	Fall 1996
Release of Draft Environmental Impact Statements	Winter 1996
Public Comment Period	Winter - Spring 1997
Respond to Public Comments / Prepare Final EIS	Summer 1997
Release of Final Environmental Impact Statement(s)	Fall 1997
Record(s) of Decision	Fall 1997
Begin Implementation	Winter 1997

# Newsletter Name Changes

In keeping with the dynamic nature of the Project, the newsletter that has been distributed to those interested primarily in eastern Oregon and Washington will now be mailed to the entire project mailing list. If you have never received this newsletter before we hope you will find it informative and useful in keeping you up-to-date about the Project.

As a result, the name "The Eastside Edge" no longer depicts the scope of the newsletter. Although the format and content will remain much the same as in the past, the newsletter now sports a new name - "The Leading Edge."



## The Leading Edge

*A periodic newsletter produced by the*

**INTERIOR COLUMBIA BASIN  
ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PROJECT**

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Please direct any questions or comments  
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