

**U.S. Department of
Homeland Security**

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commander
Thirteenth Coast Guard District

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16591/WA

18 June 2018

Katy Fitzgerald
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
11103 East Montgomery Drive
Spokane Valley, WA 99206

Re: Sandpoint Junction Connector Project

Ms. Fitzgerald:

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) is evaluating the application for Bridge Permits for replacement of two Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) bridges as part of the Sandpoint Junction Connector Project across Lake Pend Oreille and Sand Creek (aka Lake Pend Oreille Inlet), both navigable waterways of the United States, located in and near Sandpoint, Bonner County, Idaho. Enclosed is the Biological Assessment (BA) to initiate consultation under Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act.

As described in the enclosed BA, the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the ESA-listed bull trout.

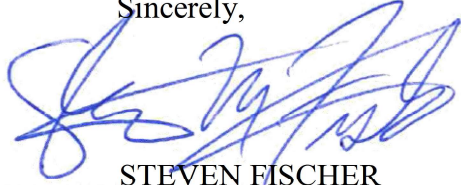
The USCG in accordance with federal statutes (Title 33 U.S.C. 401) is responsible for considering the approval of the proposed bridge construction. As such, and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 42 USC 4332(2)(C)), the USCG has assumed the federal lead agency role for this action and is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the potential effects of the BNSF Sandpoint Junction Connector Project.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) is a cooperating agency for NEPA and may issue permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq) and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 U.S. 403) for activity categories described in the enclosed BA and authorized under subsequent biological opinions (BOs). The COE will review the project to verify that consultation has occurred and as a condition of the Section 404/10 permit, will require that the project be completed according to the direction herein and any reasonable and

prudent measures or terms and conditions outlined in subsequent BOs will be included as conditions of any section 10 or 404 permit authorizing activity.

Please direct any question regarding this letter to either myself or Mr. John Greene my Environmental Policy Analyst, John.J.Greene@uscg.mil, (206) 220-7277.

Sincerely,



STEVEN FISCHER
Bridge Administrator
Thirteenth, Coast Guard District
By direction of the District Commander