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RICHARD W. WIEKING
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
OAKLAND

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

PACIFIC COAST FEDERATION OF
FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS, et al.,

No. C 02-2006 SBA

Plaintiffs,

Related Case No.
C 00-01955 SBA

v.

ORDER

UNITED STATES BUREAU OF
RECLAMATION, et al.,

*Plaintiff's Counsel are directed to serve this
order upon all other parties in this action.*

Defendants.

This matter comes before the Court on Plaintiffs' Motion for Summary Judgment [Doc. 147], the Federal Defendants' Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment [Doc. 166], the Water Users' Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment [Doc. 167], Yurok Tribe's Motion for Summary Judgment [Doc. 144], and Hoopa Valley Tribe's Motion for Summary Judgment on the Fourth Claim for Relief [Doc. 157]. Having read and considered the arguments and evidence presented to the Court in the papers submitted by the parties and at the telephonic hearing held on June 5, 2003, the Court hereby GRANTS IN PART and DENIES IN PART Plaintiffs' Motion for Summary Judgment, GRANTS IN PART AND DENIES IN PART the Federal Defendants' Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment, GRANTS IN PART AND DENIES IN PART the Water Users' Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment, DENIES Yurok Tribe's Motion for Summary Judgment and DENIES Hoopa Valley Tribe's Motion for Summary Judgment.

I. Background

A. The Klamath Project

The present litigation concerns the operation of the Klamath Reclamation Project ("the Project") for the years 2002-2012. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (the "BOR") manages the Klamath Reclamation Project, which covers approximately 200,000 miles in Northern California and Southern

1 Oregon. See Kandra v. United States, 145 F.Supp.2d 1192, 1196 (D.Or. 2001). Water collects in the
2 Upper Klamath Lake ("UKL"), which is relatively shallow and has a limited storage capacity available
3 for use during dry years. Water is drawn from UKL into the Project via the A-canal, which sits above
4 Link River Dam. Link River Dam regulates the flow of water into the lower Klamath River. Link River
5 Dam is the first in a series of dams in the Project, the last being the Iron Gate Dam. From Iron Gate
6 Dam, the Klamath River flows into the Pacific Ocean.

7 The BOR determines the level, timing, and rate of water flow through the Klamath Project. In
8 managing the Project, the BOR must balance many interests and obligations, all potentially competing
9 for the same valuable, but limited, resource. Pursuant to contracts authorized by the Reclamation Act,
10 the Project provides irrigation water to farmers and communities in the area. Additionally, water from
11 the Project supports two national wildlife refuges, the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife
12 Refuges. The BOR must also preserve the tribal resources of three Native American Tribes whose
13 territory falls within the Project-- the Hoopa, Klamath, and Yurok Tribes. See Pacific Coast Federation
14 of Fishermen's Associations v. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 138 F.Supp.2d 1228, 1231 (N.D.Cal. 2001);
15 see also Patterson v. Klamath Water Users Protective Ass'n, 204 F.3d 1206, 1213 (9th Cir. 2000) (citing
16 United States v. Adair, 723 F.3d 1394, 1408-11, 1415 (9th Cir. 1983)). The preservation of tribal
17 resources includes protection of the coho salmon and maintaining the tribes' water rights. See Kandra
18 v. U.S., 145 F.Supp.2d 1192, 1197 (D.Or. 2001) Additionally, the Project must comply with the
19 Endangered Species Act ("ESA"), Title 16 U.S.C. section 1531 *et seq.*, because its territory encompasses
20 the habitat of the coho salmon, a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. See 62 Fed.Reg.
21 24588, 24592 (May 6, 1997).¹ The coho salmon populate the waters below the Iron Gate Dam in the
22 Klamath River and its tributaries, and the Klamath River from Iron Gate Dam to the Pacific Ocean has
23 been designated critical habitat for the coho salmon.

24 **B. Requirements Under the ESA**

25 Under the ESA, the Project is prohibited from engaging in any action that is likely to "jeopardize
26

27 ¹The Ninth Circuit has found that the interests of the Tribes as well as compliance with the ESA
28 take precedence over contracts with irrigators under the Reclamation Act. See Patterson, 204 F.3d at
1213-14.

1 the continued existence of" an endangered or threatened species or result in "destruction or adverse
2 modification of [the designated critical habitat]." 16 U.S.C. § 1536(a)(2). An action "jeopardizes the
3 continued existence" of a species when the action "reasonably would be expected, directly or indirectly,
4 to reduce appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by
5 reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of that species." 50 C.F.R. §402.02. An action
6 results in "destruction or adverse modification" when the action results in a "direct or indirect alteration
7 that appreciably diminishes the value of critical habitat for both the survival and recovery of a listed
8 species." Id.

9 Whenever an agency undertakes an action that "may affect" a species listed as threatened under
10 the ESA, it must pursue consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service ("FWS") or the
11 National Marine Fish Service (the "NMFS"). The agency proposing the action (the "acting agency") may
12 prepare a "biological assessment" ("BA") to evaluate the potential effects of a proposed action. 50
13 C.F.R. § 402.12(a). As part of the formal consultation process, the consulting agency will issue a
14 "biological opinion" detailing how the proposed action will affect the listed species. 16 U.S.C.
15 §1536(b)(3)(A). If the NMFS or the FWS determines that the agency action will jeopardize or adversely
16 modify the species or its critical habitat, the NMFS or the FWS will suggest reasonable and prudent
17 alternatives ("RPAs") that "avoid the likelihood of jeopardizing the continued existence of listed species
18 or result in the destruction or modification of critical habitat." 50 C.F.R. § 402.02; see also 16 U.S.C.
19 § 1536(a)(2); 16 U.S.C. § 1536(b)(a)(3). In evaluating whether a proposed action is likely to avoid
20 jeopardy or destroy or modify a critical habitat, the NMFS or the FWS must evaluate the "effects of the
21 action," along with the "cumulative effects" on the species. 50 C.F.R. § 402.14(g)(3). "Effects of the
22 action" refers to the direct and indirect effects of an action on the species or critical habitat, together with
23 the effects of other activities that are interrelated or interdependent with that action, that will be added
24 to the environmental baseline. The environmental baseline includes...the anticipated impact of all
25 proposed Federal projects in the action area that have already undergone...consultation, and the impact
26 of State or private actions which are contemporaneous with the consultation in process. Indirect effects
27 are those that are caused by the proposed action and are later in time, but are still reasonably certain to
28 occur." 50 C.F.R. § 402.02. "Cumulative effects" are those effects of future State or private activities,

1 not involving Federal activities, that are reasonably certain to occur within the action area of the Federal
2 action subject to consultation." Id.

3 If the NMFS or the FWS determines that the proposed action or the RPA will not jeopardize a
4 species, but may result in the taking of a threatened species that is incidental to the agency action, the
5 NMFS or the FWS provides an "incidental take statement" ("ITS") along with the biological opinion.
6 16 U.S.C. § 1536(b)(4)(i)-(iii). The ITS specifies the impact of such incidental taking on the species and
7 RPAs that are necessary or appropriate to minimize such impact. 16 U.S.C. § 1536(b)(4).

8 **C. History of the BOR's Operating Plans and Compliance with ESA Requirements**

9 Beginning in 1995, the BOR began issuing annual operating plans detailing, *inter alia*, the
10 minimum flow levels in the Klamath River below the Iron Gate Dam. The plans specifically provided
11 for flows in terms of cubic feet per second ("cfs") of water. The flows were planned upon weekly or
12 monthly periods, based upon hydrological conditions for the year; e.g., Above Average, Below Average,
13 Dry, and Critically Dry. These classifications were based upon estimates received from the Natural
14 Resources Conservation Service. Generally, the accuracy of the estimates increased in temporal
15 proximity to the planned action.

16 Since 1995, the BOR has also been attempting to prepare a multiple-year operating plan,
17 including a biological assessment as required under the ESA. Before issuing the multi-year plan, the
18 BOR consulted with Thomas Hardy, Ph.D. of the NMFS, to complete a comprehensive review of the
19 status of all anadromous fish in the Klamath River. In August of 1999, Dr. Hardy released "Phase I" of
20 his report, ("Hardy Phase I"), which recommended certain interim minimum flow levels necessary to
21 protect the anadromous fish in the Klamath River. However, the Phase I report was only an interim
22 report because further testing and analysis was desired, in particular site-specific studies. In November
23 of 2001, Dr. Hardy released the draft version of the Phase II Report (the "2001 Hardy Draft Report").
24 That version included site-specific studies and further analysis. The 2001 Hardy Draft Report has not
25 been issued in its final form.

26 In 2000, the BOR issued an operating plan which instituted various flow levels. However, the
27 BOR did not seek formal consultation of the plan as required by the ESA. The Pacific Coast Federation
28 of Fishermen's Associations ("PCFFA"), brought suit in this Court challenging the BOR's 2000 plan.

1 On April 3, 2001, the Court granted PCFFA's motion for summary judgment. See Pacific Coast
2 Federation of Fishermen's Association v. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 138 F.Supp.2d at 1247. The
3 Court found that "[d]espite the weight which the Ninth Circuit repeatedly has placed upon the procedural
4 requirements of the ESA, it is clear that the Bureau of Reclamations failed to comply with these
5 requirements before implementing its 2000 Operations Plan for the Klamath Project." Id. at 1243.
6 Based on the substantial violation of the ESA's procedural requirements, the Court determined that an
7 injunction was appropriate. Thus, the Court enjoined the BOR from sending water irrigation deliveries
8 from the Project if the flows dropped below certain minimum amounts. See id. at 1250.

9 In order to determine what levels were appropriate, the Court looked to the best science available.
10 The Court determined that the best science available at the time was the Hardy Phase I report.

11 [The Hardy] Phase I report was based upon extensive input from the
12 members of a technical team, including Bureau of Reclamation staff, and
13 was created specifically to address the situation which the Bureau [BOR]
14 apparently still is confronting, namely, the need to present instream flow
15 recommendations without completed site-specific studies. Neither the
16 Bureau nor Intervenor direct the Court to any better science. Nor do they
17 offer a counter proposal concerning the type of injunction that should be
18 entered.

19 Id. at 1249-50. By its terms, the order was to expire when the BOR adopted a plan which met the
20 requirements of the ESA.

21 On April 6, 2001, three days after the Court issued its Order, the NMFS issued a biological
22 opinion (the "2001 NMFS Biological Opinion") discussing the on-going impact of the Project on, *inter*
23 *alia*, coho salmon. The 2001 NMFS Biological Opinion concluded that the low flow levels proposed
24 by the BOR for 2001 were likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the coho salmon and adversely
25 modify their habitat. The NMFS proposed a "reasonable and prudent alternative" for the Project's
26 operations including minimum flow levels they believed were necessary to avoid jeopardizing the coho
27 salmon.

28 On the same day, the FWS also issued an opinion stating that the Project needed to maintain
certain levels at Upper Klamath Lake in order to mitigate any deleterious impact upon the shortnose and
Lost River sucker fish, both of which have been listed as endangered. Based on these two opinions, and
after further consultation with the NMFS and the FWS, the BOR indicated it would implement the

1 biological opinions in its 2001 operating plan. The 2001 plan called for drastically reduced deliveries
2 of water to irrigation districts. This operating plan was challenged by irrigators and irrigation districts.
3 However, the plan was upheld by the District Court for the District of Oregon. See Kandra v. United
4 States, 145 F.Supp.2d 1192 (D.Or. 2001).

5 **D. The NRC Report and the Interim Operating Plan**

6 In December of 2001, the Department of the Interior ("Interior") and the Department of
7 Commerce ("Commerce"), sought review of the 2001 NMFS Biological Opinion and the FWS biological
8 opinion by the National Research Council ("NRC"), an arm of the National Academy of Sciences. The
9 NRC convened a Committee on Endangered and Threatened Fishes in the Klamath River Basin
10 consisting of twelve independent scientists and scholars (the "NRC Committee"). The NRC Committee
11 conducted hearings and received opinions and evidence from other individuals affected by the Project
12 or those knowledgeable in the field, including a member of the PCFFA and Dr. Hardy.² A report was
13 prepared and circulated to nine independent reviewers for additional comment and critique. Finally, it
14 was subject to a further independent examination by two external reviewers.

15 On February 6, 2002, the NRC Committee issued its "Prepublication Copy, Interim Report,
16 Scientific Evaluation of Biological Opinions on Endangered and Threatened Fishes in the Klamath River
17 Basin (2002)," (the "NRC Report"). The NRC Report recognized that "the reduction in stocks of native
18 coho salmon in the Klamath River Basin has been caused by multiple interactive factors." Changes in
19 the physical habitat associated with inadequate flows and water temperature were cited as examples.
20 However, the NRC Report found that there was not a sufficient basis to support the proposed flows in
21 the 2001 NMFS Biological Opinion.

22 The proposed low-flow limits on the Klamath River may not be of
23 significant benefit to the coho population. While the provision of
24 additional flow seems intuitively to be a prudent measure of expanding
25 habitat, the total habitat expansion that is possible given the limited
26 amount of water that is available in dry years is not demonstrably of
27 much importance to maintenance of the population. In wet years, any
28 benefits from increased flow will be realized without special limitations.
Year classes that have high relative strength should have emerged from
the wet years of the recent past flow regime if flow is limiting. This does

² The NRC Committee did not consider the Hardy Phase II report which was only in draft form.

1 not appear to have been the case in the past decade, however. Thus,
2 factors other than dry-year low flows appear to be limiting to survival and
3 maintenance of coho....[A]vailable information provides little support for
4 benefits presumed to occur through the increase of flows beyond those of
5 the last decade.

6 AR at 2942-44. The NRC Report found that higher flows might disadvantage the young coho salmon
7 between July and September because the additional flows would include water which has been warmed
8 in retention lakes. Id. High water temperature was found to be one of the reasons for the decline of coho
9 salmon. "This issue has apparently not yet been studied in any rigorous manner, yet it is critical to the
10 evaluation of higher flows in the warmest months." Id. at 2943. The NRC Report also questioned
11 whether the increased flows might have a detrimental effect upon thermal refugia which is critical to the
12 coho salmon's habitat. Id.

13 The NRC Report found that,

14 Progressive depletion of flows in the Klamath River main stem would at
15 some point be detrimental to coho salmon through stranding or predation
16 losses. Thus, incremental depletions beyond those that are reflected in
17 the recent historical record could be accomplished only with increased
18 risk to coho salmon. At the same time, the available information
19 provides little support for the benefits presumed to occur through the
20 increased flows beyond those of the last decade. While single-year or
21 multiple-year averages of low-flow extremes beyond those presently
22 reflected in the record cannot be supported, there is also presently little
23 evidence of a scientific nature that increased low flows will improve the
24 welfare of the coho salmon.

25 Id. at 2944. While the NRC Report did not find scientific support for the minimum flows proposed by
26 NMFS, the NRC Report also found that the BOR's proposal in its 2001 biological assessment could not
27 be justified. The NRC Report concluded that the BOR's 2001 biological assessment "could lead to more
28 extreme suppression of flows than has been seen in the past, and cannot be justified either." Id. at 2945.
Overall, the report concluded that "there is no convincing scientific justification at present for deviating
from flows derived from operational practices in place between 1990 and 2000."³ Id.

³ Subsequent to the release of this report, the NMFS sent a letter to NRC requesting clarification. Of particular importance, the NMFS inquired whether the NRC "considered the benefits of increased flows in the spring, when temperature is not a limiting factor." The NMFS propounded questions to the NRC on whether its recommendations about minimum flow levels were applicable to spring flows. On April 30, 2002, the NRC issued a letter in response to the NMFS' request for clarification. The NRC stated in its clarification letter that it "did consider whether there would be benefits to fry from increased

1 On February 25, 2002, the BOR issued its multi-year "Final Biological Assessment: The Effects
2 of Proposed Actions Related to Klamath Project Operation (April 1, 2002-March 31, 2012)" (hereinafter
3 "the 2002 Biological Assessment"). In accordance with the findings of the NRC Report, the BOR's 2002
4 Biological Assessment proposes flows that are intended to mimic the operational practices for the ten
5 year period beginning with 1990.

6 On February 27, 2002, the BOR initiated formal consultation with the NMFS concerning its 2002
7 Biological Assessment. The NMFS indicated that its biological opinion reviewing the 2002 Biological
8 Assessment would not likely be completed until June of 2002. In light of the fact that the NMFS was
9 not likely to release its report prior to the spring operations, on March 27, 2002, the BOR issued an
10 interim operating plan for April through May, 2002 (the "2002 Interim Operating Plan"). The 2002
11 Interim Operating Plan proposed minimum flows that were consistent with those in the 2002 Biological
12 Assessment.

13 Based upon the BOR's 2002 Interim Operating Plan, on April 24, 2002, Plaintiffs PCFFA,
14 Institute for Fisheries Resources, Northcoast Environmental Center, Klamath Forest Alliance, Oregon
15 National Resources Council, the Wilderness Society, Waterwatch of Oregon, Defenders of Wildlife,
16 Headwaters, and Representative Mike Thompson (collectively "Plaintiffs") filed a Complaint in this
17 matter, along with a motion for a temporary restraining order. Plaintiffs argued that based upon the best
18 science available, a much higher minimum flow of water from the Iron Gate Dam than set in the 2002
19 Interim Operating Plan was necessary to avoid a negative impact upon the coho salmon. Based on the
20 Hardy Phase I report, the 2001 NMFS biological opinion, and the 2001 Hardy Draft Report, they
21 asserted that coho salmon require higher instream flows of water into the lower Klamath River. Thus,
22 Plaintiffs sought a temporary restraining order preventing the BOR from restricting the flow to those

23 _____
24 spring flows." It recognizes that the concerns about increased water temperature are not present in
25 relation to the spring flows. However, the NRC asserted that it found "other weaknesses in the
26 arguments for increased flows" and that the "projected increases in habitat for the fry seemed, in the
27 opinion of the committee, quite modest at best." The NRC also found it unlikely that the coho salmon
28 are "saturating the main stem habitat" or that the main stem was a significant rearing area for the coho
salmon. Thus, the NRC's letter reaffirms its conclusion that there is no convincing evidence to support
the minimum flows proposed in the NMFS's 2001 opinion. However, the NRC did acknowledge that
the conclusions about benefits of increased flow levels might be correct pending more research and
studies.

1 levels in the BOR's 2002 Interim Operating Plan, and mandating minimum flows in accordance with the
2 2001 Hardy Draft Report. Plaintiffs argued that the BOR had not completed a formal consultation with
3 the NMFS as required under the ESA and that the putative informal consultation is invalid.
4 Alternatively, Plaintiffs asserted that even if the informal consultation is valid, the NMFS' concurrence
5 with the 2002 Interim Operating Plan violates the Administrative Procedures Act ("APA"), Title 5
6 U.S.C. sections 551 *et seq.*, because it is arbitrary, capricious, and contrary to law.

7 In an order filed May 22, 2002, the Court denied Plaintiffs' motion for a temporary restraining
8 order. Although the Court concluded that the BOR failed to satisfy the procedural consultation
9 requirements of the ESA, the Court found that the BOR could proceed with its 2002 Interim Operating
10 Plan pursuant to ESA § 7(d), which allows an agency to proceed with its proposed action prior to
11 completing consultation if it is determined that the activity would not irreversibly or irretrievably commit
12 resources which would foreclose the development of an RPA. In its Order, this Court approved the
13 BOR's use of the NRC report as the best science available, and declined to rely on the 2001 Hardy Draft
14 Report as the best science, since that report existed only in draft form.

15 While the validity of the 2002 Interim Operating Plan was being litigated in court, the NMFS
16 continued to assess the validity of the BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment and produced drafts of its
17 biological opinion. On April 23, April 29, and April 30, 2002, the NMFS and the BOR met regarding
18 the most recent version of the draft biological opinion, which proposed specific flow rates that were
19 higher than those proposed in BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment. *Id.* at 4594. The BOR proposed that
20 it should be responsible for the remedy to the extent that coho are harmed as a result of the Klamath
21 Project. *Id.* Specifically, the BOR proposed that it should be responsible for providing 57% of the flows
22 proposed in the draft biological opinion, based on the fact that 57% of the irrigable acres in the upper
23 Klamath Basin are irrigated by Project contractors. *Id.* The NMFS noted that providing 57% of what
24 it recommended as the appropriate target flows might be insufficient to avoid jeopardizing the coho, and
25 therefore would not constitute a viable RPA. However, "[t]his problem was resolved when [BOR]
26 agreed that it would use its authorities to establish a multi-agency task force/working group, comprising
27 Federal, State, Tribal and, where possible, local agencies and interests, to develop the other 43% of the
28 flows identified in the RPA. This approach anticipates that the States of California and Oregon will

1 participate in the process, step up enforcement of existing water rights or water rights laws, and develop
2 programs to improve flows in the tributaries to the Klamath above and below the Project." *Id.*

3 On May 31, 2002, the NMFS issued its final biological opinion (the "2002 Biological Opinion").
4 The 2002 Biological Opinion concluded that the BOR's proposed action contained in the 2002 Biological
5 Assessment "is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of SONC coho salmon" and "is likely to
6 adversely modify critical habitat for the SONC coho salmon." *Id.* at 4590. The NMFS then proposed
7 an RPA that could be implemented by the BOR that would avoid the likelihood of jeopardizing the
8 existence of the coho salmon or adversely modifying their critical habitat. *Id.* at 4591. The RPA
9 consists of the following elements: (1) specific water management measures over a ten-year period; (2)
10 a water bank and water supply enhancement program to provide flows to the Klamath River below Iron
11 Gate Dam; (3) an agreed-upon long-term flow target to be achieved by 2010; (4) an inter-governmental
12 task force--the Conservation Implementation Committee-- to develop, procure, and manage water
13 resources; and (5) an inter-governmental science panel to develop and implement a research program
14 to identify and fill gaps in existing knowledge regarding coho and their habitat requirements during
15 various life history states and water year types. *Id.* at 4591. These program elements are to take effect
16 in various degrees during three phases. Phase I covers the years 2002-2005. During this time, the RPA
17 requires the BOR to: 1) lay the ground work for gaining cooperation of Oregon, California, and Klamath
18 River Tribes; 2) establish a scientific panel to guide investigations to address issues identified in the
19 interim and final NRC committee reports on threatened and endangered fishes in the Klamath River
20 Basin; 3) begin to develop water supplies that are devoted to increasing flows in the Klamath River
21 below Iron Gate Dam; and 4) provide the minimum flows identified in BOR's 2002 Biological
22 Assessment, as modified on an annual basis by agreed upon use of the water bank for improved spring
23 and/or summer flows.⁴ In Phase II, covering the years 2006-2010, the BOR is to 1) maintain a waterbank
24 of 100 thousand acre-feet; 2) contribute 57% of the long-term RPA flow to the river below Iron Gate
25 Dam or the flow identified in its Biological Assessment, whichever is greater; 3) implement non-flow

26
27 ⁴In 2002, in addition to the flows proposed by the Biological Assessment for a below average
28 year, BOR is to provide 30,000 acre-feet of water. In 2003-2005, in addition to the flows proposed in
the 2002 Biological Assessment, BOR is to provide an additional 50,000, 75,000, and 100,000 of acre-
feet of water, respectively. *Id.* at 4598.

1 mitigation measures in cooperation with the Conservation Implementation Program; and 4) continue to
2 conduct investigation to refine RPA flows and relationship between flow and coho survival. *Id.* at 4601.
3 In Phase III, covering years 2010-2011, the NMFS expects that implementation of the Conservation
4 Implementation Program will have achieved the long-term flow targets set forth in the RPA. *Id.* at 4609.

5 The NMFS justifies this RPA by stating that it "provides a reasonable balance between the
6 findings of the NRC Committee...and the findings of Hardy and Addley (2001)":

7 While NMFS agrees with the NRC committee's conclusion that there is no direct
8 evidence from the Klamath River that coho will benefit from increased flow, NMFS'
9 professional judgment based on studies for the Columbia River...and the Sacramento and
10 San Joaquin Rivers...is that augmentation of spring flows likely would benefit coho in
11 the Klamath River. Therefore, this RPA includes a science program to refine flow
12 recommendations, a water bank to improve spring flows for smolts, and recommended
13 flow schedule to be implemented by 2010, unless modified by new scientific information.
14 Further, NMFS thinks that this RPA is consistent with the findings of the NRC interim
15 report because it provides for use of the water bank to buffer against allowing the average
16 flows to decline below those of the reference period....Under this RPA, the water bank
17 will be used to exceed the flows in Table 5.9 of the BA [2002 Biological Assessment]
18 and contribute to improved spring time and, if appropriate, summer habitat conditions.
19 This provides the precautionary mechanism to improve smolt out migration habitat and
20 improve smolt survival during smolt migration to the ocean. The size of the water bank
21 will increase from 30 TAF to 100 TAF through four incremental steps. In addition,
22 Reclamation has committed to provide its share of the flows that are recommended by
23 NMFS to optimize habitat for coho smolts in the main stem in the Shasta to Scott River
24 reach of the Klamath River, and to a process that will include the States of California and
25 Oregon in providing the remainder of those flows. Finally, Reclamation has committed
26 to convening a science panel to oversee design and implementation of experiments to
27 improve the quality of science regarding the relationship between flows and coho
28 survival and recovery in the Klamath River. These experiments will be conducted to
refine the long-term flow targets...established by NMFS based on the habitat suitability
curves for coho fry contained in Hardy and Addley (2001). NMFS recognizes that Hardy
and Addley (2001) habitat suitability criteria, upon which it relied to deriving long-term
flow target...may change as the report progresses through public comment and peer
review to a final report, and that even then new information from the science program
embodied in this RPA could refine that information further. Therefore, NMFS views the
flows recommended...as planning targets that could be adjusted as the body of scientific
information increases. NMFS thinks this a risk averse approach that provides
incremental improvements in habitat conditions while the science is developed to allow
refinement of our understanding of the role of main-stem habitat in coho survival and
recovery and it provides a mechanism to increase flows to the extent the need is
supported by the science that is developed.

AR at 4592-4593. The BOR has notified the NMFS of its intention to follow the RPA in 2002 and 2003.

Govindan Decl. Ex. 2.

Between September 20 and September 27, 2002, approximately 33,000 chinook, coho, and
steelhead salmon died in the Klamath River. Plaintiffs filed a First Amended Complaint in this action

1 on September 25, 2002 against the BOR and the NMFS (collectively "the Federal Defendants"). On
2 October 22, 2002, Yurok Tribe filed a motion to intervene; on November 22, 2002, the Water Users filed
3 a motion to intervene; and on December 19, 2002, Hoopa Valley Tribe filed a motion to intervene. The
4 Court granted these motions to intervene in an Order filed February 4, 2003. In addition to alleging that
5 the actions of the Federal Defendants violate the ESA, Yurok Tribe and Hoopa Valley Tribe (collectively
6 "the Tribes") allege that the BOR violated the Tribes' fishing rights by failing to provide adequate stream
7 flows in August and September of 2002.

8 The parties have now filed cross-motions for summary judgment. Plaintiffs move the Court to
9 declare that the NMFS' 2002 Biological Opinion for the Klamath Project is arbitrary and capricious and
10 is in violation of the ESA, to order the NMFS to rescind this biological opinion and its accompanying
11 incidental take statement, to declare that the BOR is in violation of its duties under the ESA, to order
12 the BOR to reinitiate consultation with the NMFS, and to enjoin any and all irrigation deliveries from
13 the Klamath Project that would cause Klamath River flows at Iron Gate Dam to fall below 100% of the
14 flow levels identified by the NMFS in the May 16, 2002 draft biological opinion until the NMFS issues
15 a valid biological opinion and the BOR complies with its terms. The Tribes join Plaintiffs' motion for
16 summary judgment with respect to its claims alleging violations of the ESA. The Tribes additionally
17 move this Court for an order declaring that the BOR violated the Tribes' fishing rights in 2002 by failing
18 to provide biologically adequate stream flows, and for an injunction requiring the BOR to operate the
19 Project in the future in a manner that satisfies the Tribes' fishing rights.

20 The Federal Defendants, along with Defendant-Intervenors the Water Users, move the Court to
21 uphold the 2002 Biological Opinion issued by NMFS for the Klamath Project, and to find that the BOR's
22 operation of the Klamath Project complies with the ESA and with the BOR's tribal trust responsibilities.
23

24 II. Motions for Summary Judgment Based on Violations of the ESA

25 A. Standard of Review

26 The 2002 Biological Opinion, including the RPA and its accompanying ITS, issued by the NMFS
27 is a "final agency action" that is subject to review under the APA. See 5 U.S.C. §702; See Southwest
28 Center for Biological Diversity v. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 143 F.3d 515 (9th Cir. 1998). Under the

1 APA, "an administrative decision involving the ESA will be set aside if the agency action was arbitrary,
2 capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law or if the action is found to
3 be without observance of the procedure required by law." Tinoqui-Chalola Council of Kitanemuk and
4 Yowlumne Tejon Indians v. United States Department of Energy, 232 F.3d 1300, 1305 (9th Cir. 2000).
5 "To make this finding, the court must consider whether the decision was based on a consideration of the
6 relevant factors and whether there has been a clear error of judgment." Citizens To Preserve Overton
7 Park v. Volpe, 401 U.S. 402, 416 (1971). "Although this inquiry into the facts is to be searching and
8 careful, the ultimate standard of review is a narrow one. The court is not empowered to substitute its
9 judgment for that of the agency." Id. "This is especially appropriate where, as here, the challenged
10 decision implicates substantial agency expertise." Mt. Graham Red Squirrel v. Espy, 986 F.2d 1568,
11 1571 (9th Cir. 1993). In engaging in its analysis, the court "shall review the whole record or those parts
12 of it cited by a party, and due account shall be taken of the rule of prejudicial error." 5 U.S.C. § 706.
13 "The focal point for judicial review should be the administrative record already in existence, not some
14 new record made initially in the reviewing court." Florida Power & Light Co. v. Lorion, 470 U.S. 729,
15 743 (1985). "The task of the reviewing court is to apply the appropriate APA standard of review, 5
16 U.S.C. § 706, to the agency decision based on the record the agency presents to the reviewing court."
17 Id. at 743-44.

18 **B. Discussion**

19 **1. The RPA**

20 As set forth in the Background section of this order, the NMFS' 2002 Biological Opinion
21 concluded that the actions proposed in the BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment are likely to jeopardize
22 the continued existence of the coho salmon and to adversely modify their critical habitat. The NMFS
23 therefore, as required by the ESA, proposed an RPA that the NMFS believes would avoid the likelihood
24 of jeopardizing the continued existence of the coho salmon and destroying or adversely modifying
25 critical habitat. The RPA requires the BOR to meet minimum flow levels, provide an additional amount
26 of water that gradually increases each year through a water bank, agree to specific long-term target flows,
27 and to establish an inter-governmental task force to develop, procure, and manage water resources and
28 an inter-governmental science panel to develop and implement a research program to further study coho

1 salmon and their habitat. During Phase I, the flow levels maintained by the BOR will consist of the
2 minimum flows identified in the BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment, as modified by agreed upon use
3 of the water bank. During Phase II, the RPA requires the BOR to provide 57% of the long-term flows
4 or the flows proposed in the BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment, whichever is greater, in addition to
5 maintaining a water bank of 100 thousand acre feet ("TAF"). In Phase III, the RPA indicates that it
6 expects that implementation of the Conservation Implementation Program will have achieved the long-
7 term flow targets listed in the RPA.

8 a. Adequacy of Flow Rates Proposed in the RPA

9 Plaintiffs assert that the NMFS' RPA is arbitrary and capricious because the target long-term
10 flow rates proposed in the RPA are not supported by the record and that the short-term flow rates, the
11 flow rates proposed for Phases I and II of the RPA, are insufficient to prevent jeopardy because they only
12 require the BOR to provide a fraction of the long-term target flow rates.

13 With respect to the long-term flow rates, Plaintiffs point to the fact that the target long-term flow
14 rates diminished between earlier drafts of the RPA and the final RPA contained in the 2002 Biological
15 Opinion. Plaintiffs also note that the final RPA breaks down flows into monthly periods as opposed to
16 two-week periods, as in previous drafts. However, the Ninth Circuit has made clear that a district court
17 has "no reason to address the possible factors that might have motivated the [NMFS] in rejecting the
18 draft RPA" since, when the NMFS considers different RPAs, it is "not required to pick the first
19 reasonable alternative [it] came up with in formulating the RPA," nor is it "even required to pick the best
20 alternative or the one that would most effectively protect the [species] from jeopardy." Southwest
21 Center for Biological Diversity v. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 143 F.3d 515, 523 (9th Cir. 1998).
22 Rather, the NMFS "need only have adopted a final RPA which complied with the jeopardy standard and
23 which could be implemented by the agency." Id. Therefore, the question before this Court is whether
24 the NMFS acted arbitrarily and capriciously or abused its discretion in adopting the long-term flow rates
25 that were in the final RPA.

26 The Court finds that the NMFS did not act arbitrarily and capriciously in adopting the long-term
27 flow rates in the RPA, since the RPA itself contains sufficient justification for the long-term flow rates.
28 AR at 4602. The NMFS describes its rationale for the long-term flow rates for March through June, July

1 through September, and October through February. AR 4602-4608. The NMFS considered the 2001
2 Hardy Draft Report, the NRC Report, as well as field observations before calculating flow rates, and
3 based the flow rates on the habitat suitability curves for coho fry contained in the 2001 Hardy Draft
4 Report. Id. The flow rates take into account the life stages of the coho salmon during different times
5 of the year, the habitat of the coho salmon, and differences in water temperature. Id. The target flow
6 rates also depend on whether the year in question is dry, below average, average, above average, or wet.
7 Id. After reviewing the NMFS' rationale for the long-term flow targets, the Court finds that the NMFS
8 considered the relevant factors and did not act arbitrarily and capriciously in adopting the long-term
9 target flow rates.

10 In addition to questioning the appropriateness of the long-term target flows, Plaintiffs challenge
11 the short-term flow levels approved in the RPA. As indicated above, RPA's phased approach only
12 requires a fraction of the long-term target flows to be achieved in the first two phases. In Phase I, the
13 NMFS requires the BOR to provide the flows specified in the BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment, plus
14 an additional annually increasing amount provided through a water bank. AR at 4596. In Phase II, the
15 BOR is required to provide 57% of the long-term RPA flow rates or the amounts specified in the BOR's
16 2002 Biological Assessment, whichever is greater, as well as maintaining a water bank of 100 TAF. AR
17 at 4601.

18 Plaintiffs argue that because the flow levels in Phase I are modeled after the flow levels in the
19 BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment, they are insufficient to avoid jeopardy. Plaintiffs point to the fact
20 that the NMFS rejected the BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment, finding that the action proposed in the
21 2002 Biological Assessment is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the coho salmon and is
22 likely to adversely modify critical habitat for the coho salmon. However, the Court notes that the RPA
23 does not require the BOR to simply provide the flow levels from the BOR's 2002 Biological Assessment
24 in Phase I. Rather, the RPA calls for modified flow levels from the 2002 Biological Assessment,⁵ as
25 supplemented by a water bank that provides annually increasing amounts of water. Moreover, even
26

27 ⁵The flows proposed in the biological assessment were modified, since the biological assessment
28 only considered 4 water type years, and the RPA converts these figures to water types for 5 water type
years.

1 though the NMFS found that the 2002 Biological Assessment was insufficient to avoid jeopardy,
2 significantly, this finding was based on an evaluation of the flows provided in the 2002 Biological
3 Assessment over the course of ten years. AR at 4590. Therefore, while the NMFS found that providing
4 the flow levels proposed in the 2002 Biological Assessment over the course of ten years is likely to
5 jeopardize the continued existence of coho salmon and adversely modify critical habitat, the NMFS did
6 not find that the flow levels proposed in the 2002 Biological Assessment would, in the short-term,
7 jeopardize the continued existence of coho salmon or adversely modify critical habitat if the flow levels
8 were increased over the course of ten years.

9 Plaintiffs additionally argue that the flow levels in Phase II, in which the BOR is required to
10 provide the greater of the flows proposed in the biological assessment or 57% of the long-term flow
11 rates, plus maintain a water bank of 100 TAF, is insufficient to avoid jeopardy to the coho salmon. The
12 57% figure corresponds to the fraction of irrigated land in the Klamath Basin that is served by the
13 Project. AR at 4594. When the BOR and the NMFS met to discuss the flow rates proposed in a draft
14 biological opinion, the BOR suggested that it should be responsible for 57% of the remedy, since 57%
15 represents the fraction of irrigated land in the Klamath Basin that is served by the Project. *Id.* As
16 Plaintiffs correctly note, the ESA does not provide that an agency is only responsible for remediating
17 its share of the harm. Rather, the ESA mandate is simple and clear-- agencies may not undertake any
18 action that results in jeopardy to the threatened species. In determining whether an action would result
19 in jeopardy, the NMFS or the FWS must evaluate the "effects of the action" which includes evaluating
20 the effects with respect to the environmental baseline, including the "impact of State or private actions."
21 50 C.F.R. § 402.14(g)(3); 50 C.F.R. § 402.02. Therefore, the focus should not be on the relative amount
22 of harm contributed by Project actions, but simply whether, taking into account the environmental
23 baseline, any action by the Project will result in jeopardy. See National Wildlife Federation v. Coleman,
24 529 F.2d 359, 374 (5th Cir. 1976)(stating that "irrespective of the past actions of others the [agency has]
25 a duty to insure that [agency action does] not further threaten the crane and its habitat"). The NMFS
26 acknowledged as much when, after the BOR suggested being responsible for 57% of the target flow
27 rates, the NMFS "pointed out that establishing flows of only 57% of the RPA flows may not avoid
28 jeopardy over the 10-year period of proposed Project operations, and therefore would not constitute a

1 viable RPA." AR at 4594.

2 However, the NMFS believed this problem "was resolved when [the BOR] agreed that it would
3 use its authorities to establish a multi-agency task force/working group, comprising Federal, State, Tribal
4 and, where possible, local agencies and interests, to develop the other 43% of the flows identified in the
5 RPA. The water to achieve these additional flows would come from areas outside the boundaries of the
6 Klamath Project. This approach anticipates that the States of California and Oregon will participate in
7 the process, step up enforcement of existing water rights or water rights laws, and develop programs to
8 improve flows in the tributaries to the Klamath above and below the Project." Id.

9 The remarks by the NMFS make clear that the NMFS believes the RPA would not be valid over
10 the 10-year period if the BOR were simply to provide 57% of the long-term flows proposed in the RPA
11 or the flows in the 2002 Biological Assessment. The remarks also make clear that the NMFS believes
12 it is in fact necessary to achieve 100% of the target flow rates identified in the RPA by the end of 10-year
13 period in order to avoid jeopardy to the coho salmon. However, the statements by the NMFS do not
14 reflect a conclusion that it is necessary to consistently provide 100% of the long-term target flows
15 throughout each phase of the program in order to avoid jeopardy to the salmon. In fact, implicit in the
16 RPA's phased approach is the ultimate conclusion that maintaining a percentage of the long-term flow
17 rates with the additional water provided by the water bank during Phases I and II will not jeopardize the
18 salmon or adversely modify their critical habitat, provided that the long-term flow rates are eventually
19 met by Phase III of the program. The question is therefore whether this implicit conclusion "was based
20 on a consideration of the relevant factors and whether there has been a clear error of judgment." Citizens
21 To Preserve Overton Park v. Volpe, 401 U.S. 402, 416 (1971).

22 As indicated above, under the RPA, during both Phases I and II, the BOR will meet or exceed
23 a modified version of the Iron Gate Dam flows proposed in the 2002 Biological Assessment, and will
24 provide additional water by maintaining a water bank. The NMFS states that the "additional water
25 should improve instream flows for coho in the lower Klamath River main stem beyond the flows
26 established in [the biological assessment] and could be used to: (1) improve downstream smolt survival
27 and improve coho fry survival in the spring; (2) investigate effect on increased summer flows on summer
28 rearing conditions for juveniles in the main stem; or (3) used to both achieve some combination of (1)

1 and (2). By March 31 of each year, NMFS and [BOR] will determine how this additional water will be
2 distributed for release." AR at 4598.

3 The RPA does not explicitly engage in an analysis of what effect the water flows in Phases I and
4 II, with the addition of the available water from the water bank, will have on the coho salmon or their
5 critical habitat.⁶ However, the phased approach described in the RPA is consistent with the NMFS'
6 description of its RPA as a "reasonable balance" between the NRC Report and the 2001 Hardy Draft
7 Report. During Phases I and II, the RPA requires the BOR to provide flow levels that are consistent with
8 the flow levels deemed appropriate by the NRC Committee. The NRC Committee found that
9 appropriate flow levels should mimic the operational practices of the ten year period between 1990 to
10 2000. The NMFS reviewed the NRC Committee's findings and agreed with the NRC Committee's
11 conclusion that there is no direct evidence from the Klamath River that coho will benefit from increased
12 flow; however, based on studies for the Columbia River and the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers,
13 the NMFS concluded that augmentation of spring flows likely would benefit coho salmon in the Klamath
14 River. Based on its conclusions, the NMFS structured the RPA to require the minimum flows proposed
15 in the Biological Assessment (which attempted to mimic the flows recommended by the NRC
16 committee), along with a water bank that can be used to supplement the flows. As described by the
17 NMFS, "the water bank will be used to exceed the flows in Table 5.9 of the BA [Biological Assessment]

18
19 ⁶ Plaintiffs provide testimony from Michael S. Kelly, a former employee at the NMFS who
20 worked on drafts of the NMFS' 2002 Biological Opinion, that suggests such an analysis should have,
21 and could have, been done. See Kelly Deposition at ¶42-43. Mr. Kelly states: "[A]t a minimum, you
22 would want to look at what the resulting flows could possibly be once you use the water bank. Now,
23 the water bank is what's being used to prevent these incremental depletions in average flows over the
24 year. The water bank can be used to help out when you think it needs to be used, it would help the most.
25 You should at least calculate what you could possibly do with 50,000 acre feet this year, 75,000 acre feet
26 the next year, 100,000 feet the next year, to look at these flows and decide if they make sense in light
27 of the other analysis that you've done.... You've determined that these flows are necessary that the ten-
28 year long recommended flows are necessary for the fish to avoid jeopardy, based on what you know.
And, granted, there's not a lot of-- a lot of real certainty in the real information, but you had enough to
develop those flows. So you need to look at whether the species is able to withstand not experiencing
those flows for that time period. And as I mentioned in the whistleblower disclosure, there are ways to
look at that, and part of that was certainly provided in the April 1st biological opinion. What does the
population experience over time when it's not provided with flows that will help increase its resiliency.
That should have been done." Kelly Deposition at 42-43. While Mr. Kelly's deposition testimony
supports Plaintiffs argument, in light of the NRC report which found that increased flow levels were
unnecessary to avoid jeopardy to the coho salmon, the Court declines to find that NMFS abused its
discretion by failing to conduct such a study prior to finalizing its RPA.

1 and contribute to improved spring time and, if appropriate, summer habitat conditions."

2 Therefore, it is clear that the short-term flow rates in Phases I and II of the RPA are based on the
3 findings of the NRC Committee, as modified by the NMFS, to prevent jeopardy to the coho salmon.
4 On the other hand, the long-term target flow rates in Phase III, discussed above, more strongly reflect
5 the 2001 Hardy Draft Report, since the NMFS based the long-term target flow rates on the habitat
6 suitability curves for coho fry contained in this report. The RPA, with its phased approach, is therefore
7 a "reasonable balance" between the NRC Committee's findings and the findings contained in the 2001
8 Hardy Draft Report. Because it is clear that the proposed short-term and long-term flow rates are based
9 on a compromise between two conflicting studies regarding the effect of flow rates on coho salmon, the
10 Court finds that the NMFS' decision to use a phased approach is not arbitrary and capricious, and the
11 flow levels established for each phase are not arbitrary and capricious.

12 **b. RPA's Reliance on Future Actions by State, Tribal, and Private**
13 **Parties**

14 Plaintiffs contend that the RPA's reliance on the establishment of a multi-agency task force to
15 develop the remaining 43% of the long-term target flows is inappropriate. When evaluating a proposed
16 action, ESA regulations direct the NMFS to consider the beneficial and harmful effects of "future State
17 or private activities...that are reasonably certain to occur." 50 C.F.R. § 402.02. Plaintiffs argue that the
18 actions by state, tribal, and private parties contemplated by the RPA are not reasonably certain to occur
19 and therefore should not be considered in the jeopardy analysis. As described in the Background section
20 of this Order, during Phase I, the BOR is to lay the groundwork for gaining cooperation of the states of
21 Oregon and California, as well as the cooperation of the Klamath River Tribes, in an effort to create the
22 Conservation Implementation Committee. In Phase II, the BOR is to implement non-flow mitigation
23 measures in cooperation with the Conservation Implementation Program. In Phase III, the NMFS
24 expects that the Conservation Implementation Program will have achieved the long-term target flows
25 set forth in the RPA.

26 In support of the RPA, the Federal Defendants assert that the RPA's reliance on future actions
27 is proper because it balances future benefits against future harms. The Federal Defendants direct the
28 Court to the Ninth Circuit's decision in Southwest Center for Biological Diversity v. U.S. Bureau of

1 Reclamation, 143 F.3d 515 (9th Cir. 1998) (hereinafter "Lake Mead"). In that case, the Ninth Circuit
2 affirmed the district court's approval of a proposed RPA that was comprised of several short-term and
3 long-term provisions that would prevent the likelihood of jeopardy to the endangered species known as
4 the Flycatcher. Id. The proposed RPA in that case required the acting agency to procure and protect a
5 specified amount of habitat in the short term and to complement the short-term measures by
6 implementing long-term measures such as an additional program of on and off-site compensation for
7 the Flycatcher habitat, as well as the development of a Multi-Species Conservation Program ("MSCP").
8 Id. at 518. The Ninth Circuit found that the threatened species "could survive the loss of habitat at Lake
9 Mead for eighteen months until 500 acres could be protected, then survive an additional two years until
10 an additional 500 acres could be protected, and finally survive through the MSCP process until
11 compensation could be made for the historical habitat." Id. at 523.

12 However, as Plaintiffs point out, the instant case is distinguishable from Lake Mead in at least
13 one important respect--in Lake Mead, there was no dispute regarding whether the long-term acquisition
14 of an alternative habitat was reasonably certain to occur. Under the ESA, a proposed action may only
15 rely on beneficial and harmful effects of future State or private activities if these activities are
16 "reasonably certain to occur." 50 C.F.R. § 402.02. In this case, there are serious concerns as to whether
17 the future actions by states or the tribes that the RPA anticipates will provide the additional 43% of the
18 flow rates necessary to avoid jeopardy in the long term are reasonably certain to occur. Cf. Lake Mead,
19 143 F.3d at 524 (finding, in that case, that "[t]here has been no indication that Reclamation [the BOR]
20 cannot acquire and restore the needed replacement habitat as specified in the final RPA by the required
21 deadlines.")

22 By the NMFS' own admission, meeting the long-term flow rates by 2010 that the NMFS has
23 proposed in its RPA, "will likely require more contributions to flow than can be reasonably provided by
24 [BOR] alone." AR at 4598. Therefore, in order to achieve the target long-term flow rates, the NMFS'
25 RPA requires the BOR to establish in Phase I, by a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") among
26 NMFS, FWS, BOR, BIA, the States of California and Oregon, and the Tribes, a "Conservation
27 Implementation Committee." AR at 4599. In Phase II, the NMFS expects the Committee to "make
28 progress toward increasing flows toward the longterm planning target, as modified by new information."

1 Id. at 4602. Finally, the NMFS states that it "expects that implementation of the Conservation
2 Implementation Program will have resulted in achieving main stem lower Klamath River flow targets."

3 Id.

4 While the NMFS's RPA "expects" to achieve the target flow rates by 2010, the NMFS provides
5 no support for its assumption that the other state and private parties will agree to take part in the
6 Conservation Implementation Committee, or that the Committee will in fact make progress toward and
7 finally achieve the target flow rates. The ESA's regulations make clear that, in evaluating whether a
8 proposed action will jeopardize the existence of a species, the NMFS is to consider the beneficial and
9 harmful effects of future State or private activities "that are reasonably certain to occur." 50 C.F.R. §
10 402.02.⁷ There is nothing to suggest that it is "reasonably certain" that the States and the Tribes will
11 participate in the Conservation Implementation Committee. Furthermore, even with their participation,
12 it is not "reasonably certain" that the Conservation Committee will achieve the target flow rates. In a
13 letter dated May 24, 2002, the State of California's Department of Fish and Game, commenting on a
14 draft opinion circulated by NMFS, stated:

15 The BO [Biological Opinion] suggests that the USBR [the BOR] will take the lead to
16 establish a multiagency task force comprising Federal, State, tribal and where possible
local agencies and interests to develop the other forty-three percent of the flows identified

17
18 ⁷Defendant-Intervenors Klamath Water Users argue that the ESA does not require that actions
19 proposed in RPAs be "reasonably certain to occur." In support of its position, the Klamath Water Users
20 point out that the "reasonably certain to occur" requirement is found in the ESA regulations describing
21 the consulting agency's review of another agency's proposed action. The guidelines state that, when
22 making a determination as to whether any proposed action results in jeopardy to a species, the NMFS
23 must consider the "cumulative effect" on the species, which include future State or private activities that
24 are "reasonably certain to occur." 50 C.F.R. § 402.14(g)(3). The Klamath Water Users argue that this
25 requirement is inapplicable to RPAs, since this requirement is contained in the section describing NMFS'
26 responsibilities in reviewing another proposed agency action's compliance with the ESA. The Water
27 Users essentially argue that NMFS's RPA need not meet the substantive standards NMFS applies when
28 reviewing other agencies' proposed actions. The Court finds this argument illogical. An RPA is a
proposed agency action. Its purpose is to provide an acting agency with a proposed course of action that
will meet the jeopardy standard articulated in the ESA. See 16 U.S.C. §1536(b)(3)(A) ("If jeopardy or
adverse modification is found, the Secretary shall suggest those reasonable and prudent alternatives
which he believes would not violate subsection (a)(2) of this section and can be taken by the Federal
agency....in implementing the agency action.") If the Court were to adopt the Water Users' position, the
Court would be allowing NMFS to propose an agency action that would not pass the standards NMFS
applies when reviewing other proposed actions. There is no support for such an illogical result, given
that the purpose of RPAs is to provide agencies with a proposed action that will meet the standards of
the ESA. The Court therefore finds that an RPA, like any other proposed agency action, should take into
consideration only those future actions by State and private entities that are "reasonably certain to occur."

