BLM Study Review of Hells Canyon Studies

E.3.2-1 An Investigation of Avian Communities and Avian-Habitat Relationships in the Hells Canyon Study Area

1. INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the study were to determine: 1) abundance and relative densities; 2) community composition during spring summer, fall, and winter; 3) relative population numbers for each year; and 4) habitat relationships of avian communities during the nesting season.

2. CONCLUSION

Monitoring points were established at 442 locations, 288 in riparian and 154 in upland habitat. Surveys conducted in the four seasons at each point. Two-hundred and twenty three bird species were observed in the HCC study area, with overall highest bird density in the spring (17.1 birds/ha) and summer (17.0 birds/ha). These bird densities were considerably lower than those found along the Snake River in the Hagerman Valley.

3. STUDY ADEQUACY

BLM believes the study would have been of more value had the vegetation data been compared with the Hagerman Valley for forested wetland, scrub-shrub wetland, and shore and bottomland wetland habitats. It is likely that the Hagerman riparian habitats contained better structure with more diverse groups of native riparian plants.

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4. BLM CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS: New plant assemblages have taken root along the reservoirs (Oxbow and Hells Canyon) creating relatively "new", since dam closure on the individual pools, riparian zones. These new plant communities may not be meeting the needs for all native birds commonly found elsewhere at more native plant dominated Snake River riparian habitats. IPC has not yet taken an active roll in recovering native riparian plant species along Oxbow and Hells Canyon reservoirs. Plant re-colonization of shoreline communities has occurred without any emphasis on encouraging natives or removing non-natives.

RECOMMENDATIONS: IPC needs to determine what native riparian plant species are missing from the "new" reservoir edge plant communities as a result of the HCC project and then assess potential for reestablishment of them.