UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
West Coast Region
1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-1274

December 18, 2020

Mr. Daniel Opalski
Director, EPA Region 10 Water Division
Park Place Building, 1200 6th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Mr. Opalski:

Thank you for your December 7, 2020 letter requesting confirmation that the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Columbia River Cold Water Refuge Plan (Columbia River Plan) and lower Willamette River Cold Water Refuge Report (Willamette River Report) satisfies the requirement of the corresponding reasonable and prudent alternative (RPA) measures in National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) 2015 Biological Opinion (NMFS No.: WCR-2013-76) on EPA's approval of Oregon's temperature water quality standard. We appreciate EPA's efforts to comply with the 2015 Biological Opinion and agree that your decision to seek input from stakeholders on a draft plan has greatly improved the content and applicability of the final Columbia River Plan and Willamette River Report.

NMFS has reviewed these documents and believes that they satisfy the intent of the corresponding RPA measures in the 2015 Biological Opinion. We agree that the Columbia River Plan and the Willamette River Report documents our increasing understanding of how adult Endangered Species Act listed salmon and steelhead are using cold water refuges as they migrate upstream through the lower Columbia and lower Willamette rivers and clearly establishes the importance of cold water refuges for the conservation of these species in the Columbia River Basin.

Lastly, we appreciate EPA's willingness to collaborate in this effort and look forward to working with you and your staff in the future to further protect and conserve fisheries resources.

Sincerely,

Michael Tehan
Assistant Regional Administrator
Interior Columbia Basin Office

Cc: Kim Kratz, Assistant Regional Administrator
       Oregon Washington Coastal Office