

*For Immediate Release—July 31, 2020*



## **Columbia-Snake Rivers plan condemned as failure for salmon, Tribes, communities**

**SEATTLE**—Organizations throughout the Pacific Northwest today called a federal plan for the Snake and Columbia Rivers a failure for salmon, Tribes and communities.

The plan, called a Final Environmental Impact Statement, or FEIS, was produced by the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Bonneville Power Administration.

The FEIS recommends a limited increase in the amount of water spilled over certain Columbia River dams and the four dams on the Lower Snake River. Concurrently, NOAA Fisheries released a BiOp, or biological opinion, supporting the FEIS' recommendation, which is known as a "preferred alternative."

Experts have concluded the preferred alternative does not do nearly enough to prevent salmon extinction on the Columbia and Snake, and therefore will end up back in court. Five plans that proceeded were ruled illegally insufficient for salmon recovery.

Organizations issued the following statements in response to the FEIS.

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The Trump Administration's reckless rush to finalize the Columbia Basin hydropower review process is heartbreaking and immoral. The fishing and tribal communities most affected by this decision have been deeply impacted by the pandemic. Our region's health, wealth, and wild abundance rests on the backs of salmon. The Trump Administration's latest plan is as likely to save endangered salmon or orcas from extinction as a glass of water is to stop a house fire.

**Giulia Good Stefani**

**Senior Attorney**

**NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council)**

The Idaho Conservation League is once more disappointed and unsurprised by a fish recovery plan that fails to recover Idaho's wild salmon and steelhead. The federal agencies' own conclusion is that implementing this plan will not restore Idaho's fish. The federal plan totally and completely fails Idaho and isn't good enough for the many guides, outfitters, river businesses, and communities in Idaho that depend on healthy runs of fish. It's clear that the federal agencies are incapable of finding a solution that works for all stakeholders in the Northwest. Over 20 years and multiple attempts, they have failed to produce anything more than lawsuits.

**Justin Hayes**

**Executive Director**

**Idaho Conservation League**

Simply put, the new plan is a slap in the face to Native American Tribes, rural fishing communities and anyone in the Northwest who cares about the future of our salmon, orcas and the economic well-being of our river and ocean communities. The Trump administration has recently finalized regulations that gut both the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, two of our nation's bedrock environmental laws—and this plan is guided by those new regulations. The new regulations are already under legal challenge; it seems all but inevitable that this new plan will end up in court too. For a path forward that can actually restore healthy, harvestable salmon, bring prosperity to our communities, build a strong, clean energy future and honor our commitments to Tribes, we need Northwest elected leaders—Governors, Senators and Representatives—to step forward, work together and propose a comprehensive solution that includes congressional action.

**Todd True**

**Senior Staff Attorney**

**Earthjustice**

While the region teeters on the brink of losing our iconic fish, communities that depend on them are losing jobs. It feels like 1993 again—tweaking the status quo, while the only certainty for fish is another court date. Sadly, this plan represents more of the environmental injustice that has been the hallmark of this administration. That is not a step toward salmon recovery and the future we all want and deserve. Thankfully, today we have leaders who are ready to have conversations about investing in a comprehensive solution for farmers, fishing towns, Tribes and clean energy. But if we don't move from talking to acting soon, the fish and our industry have no future.

**Liz Hamilton**

**Executive Director**

**Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association**

The Trump administration rushed to roll out yet another scientifically deficient plan that fails salmon, fails to honor treaties and commitments to tribes, and fails our region. Following a long line of attacks from this administration on rivers, clean water and communities, this plan proves that any real, lasting solution must come from us here in the region. We need our Northwest governors and our federal congressional delegation to lead a comprehensive solution that recovers salmon and retains reliable and affordable energy.

**Wendy McDermott**

**Director, Rivers of Puget Sound and Columbia Basin**

**American Rivers**

Salmon and fishing advocates are disappointed by the FEIS and the 2020 Biological Opinion released today by federal agencies. These documents reflect only modest tweaks to a federal government approach that has pushed salmon and steelhead populations toward extinction and increased costs, uncertainty and risks for Northwest communities. The people and salmon of our region urgently need a new approach that restores salmon abundance, invests in our communities, and sustains a reliable and affordable energy system.

**Sam Mace**

**Inland Northwest Director**

**Save Our wild Salmon Coalition**

We're disappointed with the federal government's refusal to remove the four lower Snake River dams. Instead of developing a plan that restores salmon, the agencies continue to ignore the best available science. Restoring the lower Snake River is the best way to save salmon, southern resident orcas, honor our treaty obligations to tribes and support struggling fishing communities. We need Senators Murray

and Cantwell and other leaders to bring stakeholders together so that we ensure a better future for all that share the Columbia Basin.

**Robb Krehbiel**

**Representative for Northwest Programs**

**Defenders of Wildlife**

The federal agencies' latest FEIS simply continues the failed approach of the past. It fails our salmon and orca, fails to uphold our commitment to Tribal treaties, and fails to provide certainty to the region's energy needs. It is past time to break the cycle of inadequate plans that do not meet legally-required conservation goals. What is needed now is a process that brings sovereigns and stakeholders together to develop a comprehensive solution that works for salmon, orca, and farming and fishing communities; assures clean and reliable power; and honors our Tribal treaties.

**Alex Craven**

**NW Lands & Rivers Organizer**

**Sierra Club**

After pursuing wholly ineffective strategies to recover Snake River salmon for two decades, it's time to turn to our leaders in Congress for common sense legislation that will create a healthy, intact river system that works for people, fish and wildlife. We can look to the bipartisan 'Great American Outdoors Act' as a blueprint to build on. Representative Mike Simpson has championed that legislation because he knows that careful investment in public lands and waters can and bring jobs and economic prosperity to nearby communities for decades to come.

**Tracy Stone-Manning**

**Associate Vice President of Public Lands**

**National Wildlife Federation**

Northeastern Oregonians have worked hard over the last 20 years to welcome salmon home to our 1000+ miles of Snake River tributaries. Farmers, ranchers, fisheries biologists, Tribes and conservationists have cooperated to restore the floodplains, fence the creeks, keep the rivers cold and high when it matters most for our fish. All this work and partnership is wasted if something drastic doesn't change downstream of us; that's the reality, and that's why we're deeply disappointed in this thumb-twiddling FEIS. We need a bold, inclusive, regionally-led fix for the Snake-Columbia hydrosystem: a path forward that honors the work we've done together to support salmon recovery, riparian ecologies, and fishing economies in our region.

**Christina deVillier**

**Connections Coordinator  
Greater Hells Canyon Council**

This decision by the federal government pushes endangered salmon and Southern Resident orcas closer to extinction. It is clear that the bold and comprehensive solutions needed to restore a healthy Snake River, rebuild abundant salmon, support communities, and recover the Southern Resident orca community will not come from the federal government, but must be led by our Northwest Governors and elected leaders. The unique community of Southern Resident orcas are quintessential Pacific Northwest whales, found only in our PNW waters and dependent on PNW salmon. They are Oregon's orcas, too, and Oregonians care deeply about their fate. We recognize our responsibility to help save them from extinction, and stand ready to do the work to restore healthy ecosystems and rebuild the abundant salmon populations that support the Southern Resident orcas and our communities.

**Colleen Weiler**

**Jessica Rekos Fellow for Orca Conservation  
WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation**

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