

American Rivers • American Whitewater • Association of Northwest Steelheaders • Center for Biological Diversity • Conservation Northwest • Defenders of Wildlife • Earthjustice • Endangered Species Coalition • Federation of Fly Fishers • Friends of the Earth • Idaho Rivers United • Idaho Steelhead and Salmon Unlimited • National Wildlife Federation • Natural Resources Defense Council • Northern California Council, Federation of Fly Fishers • Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association • NW Energy Coalition • Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations • Republicans for Environmental Protection • Save Our Wild Salmon • Sierra Club • Trout Unlimited • U.S. Public Interest Research Group

November 14, 2006

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the millions of citizens we collectively represent, **we are writing today to urge you to oppose any anti-salmon or other anti-environmental riders that may be attached to legislation, especially “must-pass” bills, prior to the end of the 109th Congress.** In particular, we are concerned that language could be offered this year that would jeopardize the future of Pacific Northwest salmon recovery efforts.

Restoring wild salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake River Basin is of vital importance to both the Pacific Northwest states and to the nation as a whole. These fish have national historical and cultural value and also represent a significant economic resource upon which many communities depend, from California to Alaska to Idaho. Today, however, all remaining species of Snake River salmon – once the powerhouse of the Northwest’s salmon economy – are at risk of extinction. Restoring these fish to harvestable, self-sustaining levels requires the commitment of all parties, including the states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho and the U.S. Congress. Attempts to sabotage their recovery should be vigorously opposed.

At the end of September, a U.S. district court ruled that NOAA Fisheries must rewrite its legally deficient biological opinion for endangered salmon and steelhead in Idaho’s upper Snake River. The court’s remand order came under immediate fire by representatives of Idaho’s industrial water users and by Members of the Idaho congressional delegation, warning that they would take “whatever action is necessary and possible to turn back this explicit threat....”

Rather than circumvent the court’s decision or prejudge the outcome of an appropriate remand order, we urge Congress to refrain from intervening legislatively. Any 11th hour rider that would exempt Idaho from helping to recover Pacific Northwest salmon would unfairly shift Idaho’s salmon recovery responsibilities onto California, Oregon and Washington; delay real solutions to our nation’s salmon crisis; misuse the legislative process; and undermine the “checks and balances” duty of federal courts.

We urge you to vigorously oppose any legislative interference in this ongoing judicial process. Further, we hope you will oppose all riders that seek to weaken or undermine our nation's environmental and public health protections.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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