



April 7, 2009

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 205100

Dear President Obama,

Recently, you were sent letters by Members of the U.S. House of Representatives as well as outdoor sporting goods manufacturers. They urge you to convene another summit to address Pacific Northwest salmon recovery, and specifically request you to consider partial removal of four dams on the lower Snake River.

Their proposed actions are not necessary. This very conversation has already been underway for three years. Judge James Redden has been supervising a collaboration of Federal Agencies, Northwest States and Native American Tribes as a part of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion (BiOp) lawsuit. And this collaboration will continue to happen even after the BiOp is resolved, with annual review, plus five- and eight-year evaluations to assess the success or failure of mitigation actions.

We respectfully appeal to you and your staff that you 1) allow the current regional collaboration to continue, and 2) do not order a summit that would be divisive at a time when groundbreaking strides are being made for the fish.

The collaboration overseen by Judge Redden is composed of parties that have long been at odds over salmon: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Administration, and Bureau of Reclamation; the states of Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington; and seven Northwest Native American tribes.

This collaboration has borne fruit, as evidenced by historic Columbia Basin Fish Accords signed by six tribes and the federal agencies last fall. Years of divisiveness over salmon recovery efforts in the Columbia River Basin ended when the tribes and federal agencies signed unprecedented agreements designed to deliver specific, scientifically-valid biological benefits for the region's fish.

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In addition to the tribal accords, three of the four states have reached agreements with the federal agencies. Montana's and Idaho's have been signed; Washington's is currently in the public review stage.

The court-supervised collaboration is designed to continue bearing fruit even after the BiOp case has been resolved. Groups that have previously fought each other in court now have made commitments to work together over the next ten years.

Once the current court case is resolved, the salmon recovery effort will be where it belongs: out of the courthouse and debate halls and in the field where on-the-ground habitat and fish passage projects can actually help the salmon we all cherish.

Breaching the four Lower Snake River dams has been debated for many years and studied numerous times. The answers have been conclusive every time: dam breaching is not the answer. This has been reinforced over the last ten years as the news has only gotten better since those studies were completed:

- Juvenile fish survival through the river system has increased significantly and is now higher than before the last four dams were built, and
- Adult fish returns have increased dramatically, with the highest returns since the first dam was built in 1938.

Still, dam breach advocates refuse to acknowledge the improvements that have benefited fish and led to record fish returns. They want to start over from scratch, rehash their old arguments, and create their own process to subvert Judge Redden's historic federal, state and tribal collaboration.

We urge you to support the Biological Opinion and allow Judge Redden's process to complete its work before proposing additional processes or forums. Now is not the time to engage in debate regarding just one, extremely divisive element of salmon recovery - dam breaching. We are very close to a court-sanctioned recovery plan that will unite the region. Please let that process continue.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. We look forward to continuing the productive, collaborative relationship we have had with the federal agencies that are working hard to protect and preserve endangered fish in the Pacific Northwest.

Sincerely,



Glenn Vanselow
Executive Director

PNWA is a non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(6) association that advocates for federal policies and funding in support of the Northwest's regional economy and environment. We represent multiple industries in the public and private sectors in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California. Members include public ports, navigation, transportation, international trade, tourism, agriculture, forest products, energy and state and local government interests. Since our founding in 1934, PNWA led the way for development of economic infrastructure for navigation, electric power and irrigated agriculture on the Columbia and Snake River System, including the development of the federal projects from Bonneville Lock to Lower Granite Dam. In 1971, we expanded, adding Puget Sound and coastal port members to provide a comprehensive regional perspective. Today, PNWA works with the U.S. Congress, federal agencies and regional decision leaders on navigation, transportation, trade, tourism, energy and environmental policy to enhance economic vitality and environmental health in the Pacific Northwest.