

For Immediate Release:

Contact:

Glenn Vanselow, Executive Director
Pacific Northwest Waterways Association
9115 SW Oleson Road, Suite 101, Portland, Oregon 97223
direct: 503-234-8551, glenn.vanselow@pnwa.net, www.pnwa.net



It's not whether to study, but what to study for fish

Portland, Oregon, March 14, 2007 - Advocates for a new study of dam breaching have introduced the Salmon Economic Analysis and Planning Act in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R.1507). They say they want to know the science.

"We do not object to increasing knowledge about effective recovery measures. But we do object to telling the scientists what the answers should be," said Glenn Vanselow, executive director of Pacific Northwest Waterways Association. "This bill focuses on one recovery measure, breaching the Snake River dams. Congress should not spend taxpayer money on a narrowly focused study that will simply increase the divide between the interest groups in the region."

If Congress wants to study the needs of fish, they should address the full range of current and potential actions. Judge Redden has already cast doubt on the flow-survival relationship that is the rationale for dam breaching. There are plenty of other controversial issues that are worthy of analysis. We know spill costs millions. We also know there is great debate over its effectiveness. Are we doing all we can to reduce mortality of endangered fish from non-selective harvest practices? Which hatcheries and hatchery practices help rebuild endangered salmon runs and which hurt them?

There are also other environmental, social and economic effects for each of the recovery measures. If we are going to study a set of measures, we need to know their impacts on water quality, air quality and global warming in addition to their impact on fish.

A \$20 million federal Environmental Impact Statement focusing directly on the question rejected dam breaching. That study was completed in 2002. Some say that is old information. And they ignore the science that has developed since then. Since 2000, adult salmon returns to the Basin have been the highest on record since counts began in 1938.

Dam breach advocates say that the decline in juvenile fish survival in the 1970s was due to the building of the Snake River dams. Improvements at the dams have increased survival three-fold since the seventies. And, improvements continue. According to the federal agencies in charge, survival today is as high, or higher, than it was in the 1960s, before the last four dams were built. A study released last month showed Yakima River salmon, which do not pass the Snake River dams, had identical survival rates to Snake River salmon, despite passing through four fewer dams.

Twenty-two Northwest fish runs that do not pass the Snake River dams are also listed under the ESA. Many of those are from watersheds without any dams at all. It is simply not credible to claim that taking out the dams will solve the endangered fish problem in the Northwest.

About PNWA: The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) is a non-profit 501(c) (6) that advocates for federal policies and funding in support of regional economic development. 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 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. 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 transportation, trade, tourism, energy and environmental policy to enhance economic vitality in the Pacific Northwest.

- END -

www.pnwa.net

ph. 503-234-8550 • f. 503-234-8555 • 9115 SW Oleson Road • Suite 101 • Portland, OR 97223