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## **Science and Salmon Won in Obama Decision**

*Oregon's Opposition is Off-Base*

Rather than wallowing in a morass of litigation, the Pacific Northwest is on the brink of a refreshing step forward in the long effort to aid salmon runs. The door to this new era was opened last month when the Obama Administration, after extensive review and revision by its scientists, endorsed the new federal plan for salmon recovery in the Columbia River basin – finding it “legally and biologically sound” and based upon the best available science.

The extent of the regional collaboration among the Pacific Northwest states, tribes, and federal agencies in putting the new plan together was striking and unprecedented. And, it represents an enormous financial commitment of almost a billion dollars annually by electricity customers during these difficult economic times...hardly a “status quo” effort as some critics are struggling to portray it. Ratepayer support for the plan does not come easily, and it comes only because of the plan’s consistency with the principle that the best available science should guide salmon mitigation and spending efforts.

Now, we see parties opposed to the plan, including the state of Oregon and its Governor, weighing in against the plan with public statements and opinions aimed at an audience of one: the U.S. District Court Judge who has the plan under review. This was no surprise. Oregon and other opponents claim that the plan doesn’t do enough to the dams, and that it should move aggressively toward removal of four federal dams (dams that provide enough renewable, non-carbon-emitting power to energize a city the size of Seattle) is consistent with their long-held myopic focus on the hydropower portion of this complex equation. Also, Oregon’s Governor makes the unsupportable statement that further dismantling of the hydro-system would not cause power costs to increase. Keep in mind that massive changes already in place have created superior downstream and upstream fish passage by the dams.

Why is the Obama Administration’s approach, which is endorsed by all other Northwest Governors and seven tribes, better than that proposed by the Oregon Governor and other opponents? It is because the science and the law are what matter for salmon. Despite complaints by the opposition, the plan does provide new actions for fish and does include early warning indicators that would trigger additional measures. Also, it recognizes that the hydro system is only one of the four "H's" key to salmon-- the others are Harvest, Hatcheries and Habitat (including addressing often devastating rates of consumption by predators). Actions must occur in all four areas to provide a comprehensive solution for

salmon recovery efforts. Even then, ocean conditions loom as a large factor in the fate of these runs.

Focusing on only one part of issue does a disservice to both the needs of the fish and the needs of Pacific Northwest citizens and businesses suffering from one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. Another leader from the Northwest, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, put it best: “The time has come to move out of the courtroom and get to work recovering salmon and preserving the region’s unique way-of-life.”

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