

For immediate release—June 9, 2022

**American Rivers
Columbia Riverkeeper
Earthjustice
Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light
East Fork Outfitters
Idaho Conservation League
Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association
Idaho Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Federation
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
NW Energy Coalition
Rapid Rivers Outfitters
Save Our wild Salmon Coalition
Sierra Club
Trout Unlimited
Washington Conservation Voters
Wild Orca**

Scientists, energy experts and others applaud report by Sen. Murray and Gov. Inslee; call for national action on breaching lower Snake River dams

SEATTLE—Scientists, energy experts, fishing industry leaders, conservationists and faith leaders today called on Congress and the Biden administration to act on [a draft report released by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee](#) on replacing the services of four dams on the lower Snake River.

Breaching the dams and replacing their services, the draft report finds, is doable—and the surest way to prevent salmon extinction while meeting the region’s future energy and agriculture needs.

According to the draft report, “[T]he services provided by the [lower Snake River dams] could be replaced, or even improved upon, and where they cannot be replaced or improved, mitigation and compensation could be provided. In describing how services and benefits might be replaced, this report assumes that replacement actions would be in place before dam breaching so there is no loss of benefits.”

The draft report also notes that the situation for salmon is dire. “Salmon and steelhead have declined by over 90% compared to their pre-dam abundances in the Columbia and Snake River system and the total abundance of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River is at or near the

level it was when the first Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings were registered in the mid-1990s.”

The organizations thanked Sen. Murray and Gov. Inslee for their leadership today and said the draft report should be followed by year’s end with an actionable plan for breaching.

A public comment period on the draft report will take place through July 11.

Statements from organizations follow.

* * *

Energy

"This draft report shows what we've known for years: we can replace the energy services of the lower Snake River dams and build a cleaner grid that improves reliability without sacrificing affordability. The Northwest has planned for energy replacement of this scale before and we can do it again with smart planning, investments for a better future, and regional collaboration.”

Nancy Hirsh, Executive Director, NW Energy Coalition, Seattle, WA

Science

"The fact that wild salmon and steelhead on the Yakima and John Day rivers—which have four or three dams, respectively—survive at much higher rates than those on the Snake River that must pass eight shows that Snake River fish can rebuild their runs. But we must restore a free-flowing lower Snake River and unlock the largest wild salmon refuge in the lower 48.”

Helen Neville, Chief Scientist for Trout Unlimited, Boise, ID

Recreational & Commercial Fishing

“We know that the pressing need to improve salmon survival in the Columbia Basin by removing the lower Snake River dams can be done in a manner that also meets the needs of agriculture and energy resources in our region. For too many years, farmers and fishermen have been wrongly pitted against each other when we are in fact natural allies in the production of food resources in the Basin and beyond. I urge all regional political leaders and the Biden Administration to embrace the findings of this report and work with food producers and other stakeholders to develop solutions that will work for everyone.”

Joel Kawahara, commercial salmon troller, F/V Karolee, Quilcene, WA

"The science has long been clear: in order to recover, if not restore, Snake River salmon and steelhead we must remove the Lower Four Snake River Dams (LSRD). It is imperative that in doing so we mitigate the impacts on stakeholders and communities and replace the services the

LSRD currently provides. We *must* do both of these things, and this report throws into sharper relief *how* we can do so.”

Aaron Lieberman, Executive Director, Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association (IOGA)

"We have been struggling as fishing guides. Reduced bag limits and in some cases season closures had negatively affected our work opportunities, businesses and communities. I appreciate that Senator Murray and Governor Inslee in Washington are stepping forward alongside Idaho Congressman Simpson with efforts to address this issue in a way that ensures that my friends, neighbors, and fellow statesmen will not be forced into the hardships we have been facing as fishing guides. A solution that includes all is the only solution that works for me.”

Jon Kittell, Fishing Guide and Business owner, Riggins, ID

“It is time to set aside our old dialogue of us versus them, me versus you, fisherman versus farmer. If everyone can see each other as humans we can sit down together and come up with solutions that work for all parties involved.”

Roy Akins, Owner, Rapid River Outfitters, Riggins, ID

"After spending 19 billion dollars giving Columbia Basin salmon everything but what they need—more free-flowing river miles—political leaders, like Washington Senator Patty Murray and Governor Jay Inslee, are exploring how we can restore salmon by giving them what they truly need. Those of us in the sport fishing industry have suffered harm due to decades of fishing restrictions and closed seasons. Recovering salmon to harvestable abundance would revitalize our industry and the many rural jobs related to the Northwest's signature fish.”

Buzz Ramsey, Fishing Tackle Veteran & Outdoor Communicator

"As a lifelong angler and owner of East Fork Outfitters, I'm incredibly concerned about our nation's Northwest salmon and steelhead runs as both species edge closer to extinction. In Washington state, over 940,000 people fish, spending \$1.5 billion and supporting 15,000 jobs. Fishing helps sustain the economy in small communities in the Northwest where opportunities may otherwise be limited. Our livelihoods are at risk unless bold action is taken now to recover our once abundant salmon and steelhead.”

Matt Eleazer, owner and operator, East Fork Outfitters, Battle Ground, Washington

“Tribal, sport, and commercial fishers, orca, and others who depend on these fish, need urgent and bold action to restore salmon to abundance. The “why” of the Murray Inslee report is painfully obvious to us. Now, we have leadership willing to ask the questions of how and when. How do we restore salmon and steelhead to an abundance that sustains fishing communities and orca, and how do we modernize the transportation, energy and irrigation systems in the basin to meet our future needs. We are grateful to Senator Murray and Governor Inslee's work to produce this important information at a critical time for salmon and steelhead.

Liz Hamilton, Executive Director, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association

Faith Community

“Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light's multifaith community has been engaged in Lower Snake River salmon recovery in a way that shows care as much for people, our neighbors, as for creation. Our many faiths call us to steward a free-flowing Lower Snake River in a way that prioritizes the inherent and treaty-protected rights of Native Nations and honors the varying needs of all the region's residents. This report provides us with the path forward to not just meet our legal obligation or address a biological necessity, but also to fulfill a moral imperative to recover salmon as a spiritual and cultural icon of the Pacific Northwest.”

Rev. AC Churchill, Executive Director, Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light, Seattle, WA

“At the root of many spiritual traditions is the idea that we are a part of—not separate from—the natural world. To me as a rabbi, and to faith communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, this means recognizing the sacred role salmon play in our ecosystem, and doing what we can to protect and steward them, the orca, the water, and the land. To prevent extinction and instead live in harmony, we must swiftly step into this report's tangible actions to restore a free-flowing Lower Snake River.”

Rabbi Seth Goldstein, Temple Beth Hatfiloh, Olympia, WA

“The report from Gov. Inslee and Sen. Murray lays out a path forward that provides long-denied justice for Indigenous Sovereigns, survival for endangered salmon and orcas, and the promise of a thriving regional economy for farmers, rate-payers, fishermen and all who depend on the river for their livelihoods. It calls for transforming out-dated infrastructure to a more earth-friendly style. It will take courage and leadership to implement, but anything worthwhile always does.”

The Rev. John Rosenberg, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (retired), Tumwater, WA

Conservation

"The lower Snake River Dams - and the costs to prop them up - are actively hurting businesses, hurting people and hurting communities in Idaho while benefiting the few. This report proves that we have a choice to change direction - that we can implement a system that benefits all of us. The report proves we can breach the dams and meet the needs of agriculture, energy production, fish and fish reliant communities. It's unconscionable to see the two paths before us and choose the one that leaves so many of us behind."

Brian Brooks, Idaho Wildlife Federation

"Washington Conservation Voters thanks Senator Murray and Governor Inslee for their leadership in shaping collaborative discussions that meet Washingtonians' needs along the Lower Snake River and the viability of solutions that replace the services the dams currently provide. It is imperative that our energy system evolve to meet our needs today and for generations to come. We know we have more work to do to recover salmon and meet Tribal

Treaty Rights, and this exciting effort represents a new way forward grounded in the values we share across the state."

Alyssa Macy, CEO, Washington Conservation Voters, Seattle, WA

"The release of the draft report is a crucial opportunity to address an urgent crisis. It's assessment that we can replace the services of the lower Snake River dams if we develop an effective plan as soon as possible shows the way forward to get out of the courtroom, break the multi-decade cycle of failed plans and litigation and actually make the decisions now that will lead to restoration of the lower Snake River and removal of the four dams there. Our Northwest elected leaders and the Biden Administration must seize this opportunity and make the decision to move forward now, for the future of Snake River salmon, to begin to right an historic injustice to Native American Tribes, and for all of the other interests that would benefit from a comprehensive and thoughtful plan to resolve this long-stalled controversy."

Todd True, Senior Attorney, Earthjustice, Seattle, WA

"The Sierra Club appreciates the good work and comprehensive approach by Senator Murray and Governor Inslee in evaluating our ability to replace the services from the lower Snake River dams. It is clear from the draft report we can replace these services in a timely and affordable manner. It is equally clear that we must move forward quickly to prevent extinction of salmon and steelhead, restore abundance, help orca and meet our commitments to Northwest Tribes. In short - we can and must move forward quickly to remove the dams, restore the salmon and position the Northwest for the future."

Bill Arthur, Chair, Sierra Club

Snake/Columbia River Salmon Campaign, Seattle, WA

"American Rivers appreciates Senator Murray and Governor Inslee's leadership in evaluating how to replace the benefits provided by the four Lower Snake River Dams. American Rivers is committed to implementing solutions that enable everyone to do well, whether you make your living catching fish off the coast or growing potatoes near Pasco. This region cannot afford to ignore the loss of salmon. Let's work together to make change work in favor of everyone."

Wendy McDermott, Northwest Regional Director, American Rivers

"Restoring a free-flowing Snake River will be the most significant salmon recovery action of our lifetimes. Thank you, Senator Murray, and Governor Inslee, for illuminating the path to a brighter future for people and salmon. The report confirms that the dams' services can be provided in alternative ways. Now it is time to invest in those alternatives and restore a free-flowing lower Snake River before it is too late."

Chris Wood, Trout Unlimited President and CEO, Arlington, VA

"Senator Murray and Governor Inslee's draft report confirms that we can protect and restore the Northwest's rapidly declining salmon populations, honor our nation's promises to Tribes, create economic opportunity - and feasibly and affordably upgrade the energy, irrigation and transportation services provided by these aging dams. This report must now serve as the foundation for regional policymakers and the Biden Administration, working with Tribes and

other communities, to develop and deliver a comprehensive regional package this year to restore lower Snake River, invest in communities, and move everyone forward together. There is great urgency today to act, but also great opportunity for salmon, orcas and our communities.”

Joseph Bogaard, Executive Director, Save Our wild Salmon Coalition, Seattle, WA

"Today's draft report brings us another step closer to un-damming the Lower Snake River to stop the extinction of salmon and Southern Resident orcas. The report explains the urgency of Snake River dam removal for salmon, orcas, and Tribal cultures, and shows it's possible to replace the services of the four Lower Snake River dams. While we do not agree with all of the report's assertions, we applaud Senator Murray and Governor Inslee's leadership on this issue; we expect them—and the Biden Administration—to follow through on their promises to propose a durable path forward that includes Lower Snake River dam removal by July 31, 2022."

Miles Johnson, Senior Attorney, Columbia Riverkeeper

“To save the iconic Southern Resident killer whales we must save Pacific salmon. Healthy, accessible river habitats are key to their survival, and critical given the climate crisis. Governor Inslee and Senator Murray’s carefully considered report clearly demonstrates that we can replace the services provided by the Snake River dams, and once again open up access to essential spawning habitat in the Columbia River basin. The Snake was once home to some of the largest Chinook runs in the lower 48, now they’re struggling for survival, as are the killer whales that depend on them. Restoring the Snake River is essential if we are to save them both from extinction.”

Deborah Giles, Science & Research Director, Wild Orca

"Snake River salmon are barreling toward extinction — and unless we act, the communities, jobs, and traditions they support will vanish with them. We urge the Biden Administration to work with Congress to create a future where salmon—and the Tribes and communities that depend upon them—thrive by removing the lower Snake River dams. This is paramount if we are to save this natural resource of national importance, honor our nation’s commitment to Northwest Tribes, and ensure all communities are made whole,”

Collin O’Mara, President and CEO, National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D.C.

“This report confirms what we already know: wild salmon, steelhead, orcas, and Tribal justice need action now. Snake River salmon are on the edge of extinction, and there’s no time to delay. The services provided by these dams can be replaced or improved upon, just as Congressman Mike Simpson concluded nearly 18 months ago. Now it’s time to act. The Pacific Northwest delegation has an opportunity and an obligation to remove these dams, restore our salmon, recover our orcas, and honor our nation’s promises to Tribes. Senator Murray, Governor Inslee, and other elected officials must act before it’s too late.”

Mitch Cutter, Salmon & Steelhead Associate, Idaho Conservation League, Boise, Idaho

###

Contact:

Chris Nelson

206-940-1605 (mobile)

cnelson@pyramidcommunications.com