

**American Rivers * Earthjustice * Federation of Fly Fishers * Friends of the Earth *
Idaho Rivers United * Idaho Wildlife Federation * National Wildlife Federation *
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association * NW Energy Coalition * Pacific
Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations * Pacific Rivers Council *
Republicans for Environmental Protection * Salmon For All * Save Our Wild
Salmon * Sierra Club * Trout Unlimited * Union of Concerned Scientists *
U.S. PIRG * Washington Wildlife Federation * Washington Trout**

July 12, 2005

The Honorable Pete V. Domenici
United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Remove Anti-Salmon Report Language from the Energy and Water Appropriations Bill

Dear Senator Domenici:

The below-signed organizations represent a rich diversity of interests – ranging from salmon-dependent businesses, recreational fishing enthusiasts, conservation organizations, and others – united in our work towards the recovery of Pacific Northwest salmon and steelhead. On behalf of the millions of citizens nationwide and businesses throughout the Northwest that we collectively represent, we are writing to express our opposition to report language inserted into the Senate Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill Committee Report (Rpt. No. 109-84) that, if passed, would derail science-based efforts to recover Northwest salmon and steelhead populations. Specifically, the report contains language that instructs the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to eliminate funding for the Fish Passage Center (FPC), a scientific support office created by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council in 1984 to help state and federal fish and wildlife agencies meet their statutory salmon and steelhead recovery obligations. We urge you to remove this language from the final conference report.

In May, a federal district court in Oregon ruled that the federal government's 2004 Columbia and Snake River Biological Opinion violates the Endangered Species Act. The FPC report language would compromise the ability of the region to develop a sound strategy to recover federally protected salmon in the Columbia and Snake rivers. The FPC plays a vital role in ensuring that federal and regional salmon recovery efforts in the Columbia and Snake River Basin are guided by the best available scientific information. Without the FPC, fishery agencies in the Pacific Northwest would be forced to make management decisions and recommendations without adequate information. In particular, the FPC provides daily support to state, federal, and tribal fish and wildlife managers and analyzes current and historic data to guide river management recommendations and decisions. FPC data are independently audited to assure accuracy, providing scientific support that is unencumbered by politics and available to the general public.

The report language suggests that there are universities in the Pacific Northwest “well positioned to take on the responsibilities of the [FPC]” at a “savings” to the region. To the contrary, the FPC is unique in the Northwest; no other entity is constituted to provide the same level of high quality scientific support for the region’s fish and wildlife managers (see attached fact sheet for more information). According to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, eliminating the FPC would actually *increase* federal and regional costs because new resources would be needed to replace the valuable services it currently provides. Moreover, the FPC operates on an efficient, cost-effective budget of roughly \$1.3 million per year, funded through Northwest electricity rates. For most residential ratepayers, the cost of funding this valuable office is *less than one cent* on monthly energy bills.

The FPC is widely supported in the Pacific Northwest. The State of Oregon, Umatilla and Nez Perce Tribes and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife already expressed opposition to this report language. When a nearly identical proposal was debated (and rejected) in the region in 2004 by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, a multi-state compact created by Congress, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission also defended the FPC. We once again urge you to remove this language from the final Energy and Water Appropriations Conference Report and oppose any other efforts in Congress to undermine this important court decision.

Sincerely,

Pat Ford
Executive Director
Save Our Wild Salmon

Liz Hamilton
Executive Director
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association

Lexi Shultz
Washington Representative
Union of Concerned Scientists

Paula J. Del Giudice
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National Wildlife Federation

Bill Sedivy
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Sara Zdeb
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Marty Hayden
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Earthjustice

Oliver Waldman
Executive Director
Salmon For All

Bill Redman
Chair, Steelhead Committee
Federation of Fly Fishers

John McGlenn
President
Washington Wildlife Federation

Jeff Curtis
Western Conservation Director
Trout Unlimited

Russ Heughins
Issues Coordinator
Idaho Wildlife Federation

Kathleen Casey
NW/Alaska Regional Field Director
Sierra Club

Glen Spain
Northwest Regional Director
**Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's
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Anna Aurilio
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U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Kurt Beardslee
Executive Director
Washington Trout

David Jenkins
Government Affairs Director
Republicans for Environmental Protection

S. Elizabeth Birnbaum
Vice President for Government Affairs
American Rivers

David Bayles
Executive Director
Pacific Rivers Council

Sara Patton
Director
NW Energy Coalition

Cc: Senator Thad Cochran, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
Senator Robert Byrd, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
Representative Jerry Lewis, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
Representative David Obey, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
Pacific Northwest Congressional Delegation
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
The Honorable Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor, State of Oregon
The Honorable Christine Gregoire, Governor, State of Washington
The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, Governor, State of Idaho
The Honorable Brian Schweitzer, Governor, State of Montana
D. Robert Lohn, Northwest Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries
Stephen J. Wright, Administrator, Bonneville Power Administration
Brig. Gen. William T. Grisoli, Commander and Division Engineer, Northwest Division, U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers
J. William McDonald, Regional Director, Pacific Northwest Regional Office, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
James L. Connaughton, Chairman, Council of Environmental Quality