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Larry Cassidy, Chairman
Northwest Power Planning Council
851 S.W. 6th Ave., Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204-1348

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Dear Larry,

You and the Northwest Power Planning Council (Council) are to be congratulated for the courage and leadership shown concerning volumes of water for Salmon and Steelhead. It is no small feat to change a course of action embedded in an Environmental Species Acts, Biological Opinion.

I believe the underlying concern of the Tribes, is that reducing volumes of water for fish is not a science-based improvement but rather, the beginning of a return to little or no water for fish. Many of us industry representatives believe that the Council's action is a science-based true up of water volumes for Salmon. We hope that if the Council's action does change the current water regime, that sufficient monitoring is put in place to demonstrate whether Salmon survival is changed at all and what the change is. In this way, the balance between competing interests can be continually improved. Salmon have a legitimate claim on the watersheds of the Pacific Northwest, but not on exclusive one.

There remains the underlying fundamental issue that Council leadership must help determine. The Council must drive to define --- What is recovery? As someone once said, ... "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there." We have been traveling many roads, some to dead ends. We cannot afford, politically or economically, to wander down whatever path appears promising until we decide on where we need to go. Again, what constitutes Salmon Recovery?

Thank you again for taking on the difficult issues. It is hard work but rewarding and greatly benefits the people of the Pacific Northwest.

Sincerely,



M. Steven Eldrige
Chief Executive Officer

Enc.

Power council plan calls for releasing less water for fish

Critics accuse the Northwest Power Planning Council of putting electricity generation above the needs of salmon

By **JONATHAN BRINCKMAN**
THE OREGONIAN

The Northwest Power Planning Council is recommending that federal dams in the Columbia River Basin increase wintertime electricity generation and that reservoirs in Montana and Idaho release less water each spring to help carry young salmon to the sea.

The council rejected proposals by Oregon and Columbia River tribes to increase releases of water to benefit salmon. The council plan is not binding on the federal government but is important because it represents the consensus of Northwest states.

Under the draft plan, less water would be held in inland reservoirs each winter. It calls for a new assessment of the benefits to salmon of sending water over spillways at federal dams instead of through electricity-generating turbines. Young salmon can be killed or injured in the spinning turbines.

One of Oregon's two council representatives, Eric Bloch, voted against the plan; the other, John Brogoitti, voted for it, along with all the representatives from Idaho, Montana and Washington. Congress set up the council in 1980 to balance power production with fish and wildlife protection in the four states.

The federal government's salmon-recovery guidelines, released in December 2000, call for water to be released from federal reservoirs each spring and summer to increase flows in the Columbia and Snake rivers. The guidelines require that millions of gallons of water be sent over spillways to help young salmon avoid the turbines.

On Friday, conservationists reacted angrily to the power council's proposal, saying it erred by putting electricity generation above the needs of salmon.

But Tom Karier, one of Washington state's two representatives on the council, said it made sense to study the costs and benefits of spilling water for salmon. "This is an example of looking for ways to utilize scarce resources for fish at significantly lower costs. I think there is a lot of concern that if we were to change things it will be

worse for fish. I don't share that view."

Some research indicates that spill can be decreased without hurting migrating salmon, Karier said, allowing more electricity to be generated. But it's also possible the council would recommend that more water be spilled over the dams if studies show that increasing spill would help salmon, he said.

The plan calls for holding water in Montana reservoirs until later in the year, which representatives of that state said would benefit bull trout and other fish that live in those reservoirs — without hurting salmon.

The council will accept written comments about the plan until Jan. 10 and will hold hearings in Idaho, Montana and Oregon, with a final public hearing Jan. 14 in Vancouver.

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