

*350 Seattle ♦ American Whitewater ♦ Association of Northwest Steelheaders  
Backbone Campaign ♦ Center for Environmental Law & Policy ♦ Columbia Riverkeeper  
Earthjustice ♦ Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light  
Endangered Species Coalition ♦ Environment Washington ♦ Fly Fishers International  
Friends of Grays Harbor ♦ Friends of San Juans ♦ Frosty Hollow Ecological Restoration  
Fuse Washington ♦ Great Old Broads for Wilderness ♦ Idaho Conservation League  
Idaho Rivers United ♦ Idaho Wildlife Federation ♦ Lands Council  
National Parks Conservation Association ♦ National Wildlife Federation ♦ Native Fish Society  
Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment ♦ North Cascades Conservation Council  
Northwest Guides and Anglers Association ♦ Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association  
Northwest Watershed Institute ♦ Olympic Forest Coalition ♦ Olympic Park Advocates  
Orca Network ♦ Pacific Rivers ♦ Puget Soundkeeper Alliance ♦ Rainier Audubon Society  
Save Our wild Salmon Coalition ♦ Seattle Aquarium ♦ Sierra Club ♦ Snake River Savers  
Snake River Waterkeeper ♦ Snohomish County Indivisible ♦ Spokane Riverkeeper  
Solutionary Rail ♦ Sound Action ♦ The Natural History Museum ♦ The Salish Sea School  
Vancouver Audubon Society ♦ Washington Conservation Voters  
Washington Environmental Council ♦ Washington Kayak Club  
Washington State Council of Trout Unlimited ♦ Washington Wild  
Washington Wildlife Federation ♦ Wenatchee Outdoors ♦ Whale Scout  
Whidbey Environmental Action Network ♦ WildEarth Guardians ♦ Wild Orca  
Wild Steelhead Coalition*

August 17, 2022

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20015

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Thank you for your leadership in securing nearly \$3 billion in federal funding last year to protect and restore imperiled salmon in Washington State and regionally, and for your recent work on clean energy adoption, battery storage, and power grid resilience. These are consequential investments in and a down payment for a comprehensive salmon recovery that the Northwest so urgently needs. Now your support and leadership is needed for the biggest opportunity to restore abundant salmon in the lower 48 states – restoring the Snake River and its once abundant salmon and steelhead populations.

The draft “Lower Snake River Dams Benefit Replacement Report” released by Senator Murray and Governor Inslee in June makes clear that the dams’ services – energy, irrigation, and barge transportation - can be fully, feasibly, and affordably replaced with reliable, cost-effective, clean energy alternatives. Our state and region face a moment of great urgency and opportunity

today that will heavily influence our environment, economy, communities and ways of life for decades to come.

A series of recent reports and developments confirm what scientists and other experts have told us for many years - that developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to remove the four lower Snake River dams as quickly as possible, is our most certain and only reasonable option to stop Snake River salmon extinction, restore our state's rapidly declining salmon populations – and rebuild the irreplaceable benefits they bring to other fish and wildlife populations, including critically endangered Southern Resident orcas, and tribal and non-tribal communities across the Northwest.

- In a synthesis of scientific analysis, NOAA-Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists confirm what state, tribal and independent scientists have told us for years: Northwest salmon and steelhead will go extinct without an urgent plan that includes the removal of the lower Snake River dams. “The science robustly supports process-based stream habitat restoration, dam removal (breaching), and ecosystem-based management, and overwhelmingly supports acting, and acting now.” And their analysis specifically notes, “For Snake River stocks, it is essential that the lower Snake River be restored via dam breaching.”
- The Biden Administration joined the plaintiffs in the Columbia Basin BiOp litigation - the State of Oregon, the Nez Perce Tribe, and a dozen fishing and conservation organizations represented by *Earthjustice* - in asking the U.S. District Court in Oregon to extend an initial stay for an additional thirteen months – through August 31, 2023 – to allow development and implementation of specific actions as part of a comprehensive solution. Attached to the motion to extend the stay was a detailed commitment by the Biden Administration “...supporting the development of a durable long-term strategy to restore salmon and other native fish populations to healthy and abundant levels, honoring Federal commitments to Tribal Nations, delivering affordable and reliable clean power, and meeting the many resilience needs of stakeholders across the region.”
- Earlier this month, *OPB / ProPublica* published an important examination of how the Bonneville Power Administration is contributing to salmon’s decline, stating: “For decades, judges have admonished the federal government over its failure to do more to protect Columbia River salmon. Most recently, the Biden administration... took the unprecedented steps acknowledging the harm dams have caused to Native American tribes and calling for an overhaul of Columbia River Basin management. Bonneville, the government’s power marketing arm on the Columbia, is the federal agency involved in every measure the Biden team is discussing to save salmon. But an investigation by *Oregon Public Broadcasting* and *ProPublica* has found that Bonneville has, time and again, prioritized its business interests over salmon recovery and actively pushed back on changes that tribes, environmental advocates and scientists say would offer the best chance to help salmon populations recover without dismantling the entire dam system.”

Clearly, we cannot continue the status quo of spending billions of dollars on failed recovery and mitigation efforts, expensive litigation, and outdated infrastructure. Salmon and steelhead, and salmon-dependent Southern Resident orcas, continue to decline despite these massive yet inadequate investments. We urgently need a new approach that is legally valid, scientifically credible and fiscally responsible.

We need your leadership Senator Cantwell, alongside the Biden Administration, Senator Murray, Governor Inslee, and Northwest Tribes and stakeholders to develop and support a comprehensive set of actions that will protect/restore salmon, invest in updated infrastructure, increase economic opportunities, and move everyone forward together!

Please commit to working with Senator Murray, Governor Inslee, other Northwest leaders, and the Biden Administration to advance this important, urgent and necessary opportunity to address one of our nation's largest and most pressing river restoration, salmon recovery and environmental justice issues.

Sincerely,

Collin O'Mara, President and CEO  
***National Wildlife Federation***

Alyssa Macy, CEO  
***Washington Environmental Council / Washington Conservation Voters***

Bill Arthur, Chair: Snake/Columbia River Salmon Campaign  
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***Whale Scout***

Gary Piazzon, President  
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