

Northwest
RiverPartners
For salmon, our economy and quality of life

May 15, 2006

James L. Connaughton, Chairman
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Chairman Connaughton:

Northwest RiverPartners (RiverPartners) is a non-profit association representing a broad consortium of river users in the Pacific Northwest including utilities, large and small businesses, ports, maritime trade and food processing interests. RiverPartners' members are dramatically affected by efforts to recover listed endangered salmon and steelhead in the Pacific Northwest through Bonneville Power Administration rates and federal hydropower system operations. Through payment of these rates, our members have funded the vast majority of salmon recovery actions in the region. We believe science-based, cost effective fish recovery efforts will benefit listed species and maintain the multiple uses of the Columbia and Snake River systems to support a healthy economy.

Our members have supported, and continue to support, your call for improvements in hatchery practices and for stopping or significantly restricting harvest and harvest practices that threaten the region's prized salmon and steelhead populations. We are requesting, and would appreciate, an update on the Administration's current efforts with respect to harvest activities.

We agree with the premise of your remarks at Salmon 2100 this past January that improvements in federal hydrosystem operations and habitat must continue. Much has already been accomplished to improve hydrosystem operations over the years at significant cost to the regional economy. There also has been considerable progress in the current Biological Opinion remand process focused on past, current and future improvements in federal hydrosystem operations. NOAA Fisheries also has initiated a rigorous review of hatchery practices, based on the model of the Hatchery Scientific Review Panel undertaken in Puget Sound. These actions should be thoroughly coordinated with harvest actions and considerations.

In your remarks, you indicated there would be renewed scrutiny and modification of existing agreements for ocean harvest and for the 2005-2007 Columbia River harvest agreement. To our knowledge, action has not occurred to implement this initiative and it

is not being discussed as part of the ongoing BiOp remand process. Also, you indicated that within the year, the Administration would propose a reduction in harvest levels and would work with the Northwest states, harvest treaty tribes and Canada to find ways to best accomplish this objective.

Commercial and sport fishing was recently severely curtailed or shutdown on *unlisted* stocks returning to the Klamath basin while the harvest rate on endangered Snake River Fall Chinook remains high. We believe, as you do, that salmon recovery in the Northwest requires a comprehensive and rigorous approach that includes all the “H’s”. We appreciate the efforts of the Administration; and of Congressmen Baird, Walden and Dicks to shed light on harvest’s important role in recovering listed stocks, but are not seeing any meaningful action on harvest. RiverPartners would appreciate information on specific activities the Administration has put in motion, or plans to put in motion, related to harvest and harvest practices

We thank you for your time and consideration of these comments. We strongly support the Administration’s efforts to enact a collaborative, comprehensive approach to salmon recovery and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Terry Flores, Executive Director
Northwest RiverPartners

Cc: Bob Lohn, NOAA Fisheries
Steve Wright, BPA Administrator
Brigadier General Martin, USAC
Bill McDonald, Bureau of Reclamation
Tom Karier, Chair, NPCC
Congressman Norm Dicks
Congressman Greg Walden
Congressman Brian Baird