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Court Ruling on Federal Salmon Plan Sets Region Back to Square One *Calls Endangered Species Act into Question*

Statement from Terry Flores, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners:

Northwest RiverPartners is extremely disappointed in today's ruling by U.S. District Judge Michael Simon regarding the federal salmon plan, or Biological Opinion (BiOp), which fails to acknowledge that this BiOp is the most science-based, comprehensive and expensive effort to restore an endangered species in the nation, and is supported by the Obama Administration.

The decision potentially unwinds years of collaboration between federal agencies, Northwest states and tribes, and other stakeholders. The ruling does not provide a path forward for the region, other than re-doing the plan's analysis and conducting an evaluation of alternatives, including dam removal, under the National Environmental Policy Act.

While the judge keeps the salmon plan in place and acknowledges its many measures are benefiting salmon, he concludes that they are not enough. The ruling creates years of more analysis of little value to the listed species. During the Obama Administration's review of the science underpinning the BiOp, Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA Administrator and Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, as well as independent scientists, concluded:

"Overall it was an excellent analysis that used the best available science that was used in an extremely thoughtful way. The assumptions made were perfectly reasonable and it was done as well as it could have been done."

Sadly, this court has failed to give deference to the agencies with expertise on the science as called for under the law. This BiOp, with its unprecedented collaboration, measures, investment and sound science, was considered a model; if it is not sufficient, that raises a fundamental question of whether the Endangered Species Act is at all workable.

For further information or media interviews:

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Northwest RiverPartners is an alliance of farmers, utilities, ports and businesses that promote the economic and environmental benefits of the Columbia and Snake Rivers and salmon recovery policies based on sound science.

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