



PRESS STATEMENT

**October 9, 2020
Vancouver, WA**

Northwest RiverPartners Supports Goals of Four Governors; Asks for Scientific Grounding to Ensure Best Outcome

Today, the governors of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana released a joint letter (see attached) committing to an effort to help recover threatened and endangered salmonid species in the Columbia River Basin.

The governors have expressed their desire to continue the work of the [Columbia Basin Partnership](#) (CBP). Established by NOAA Fisheries in 2017, the objective of the CBP was to bring together regional stakeholders to create a shared vision for salmon abundance goals and to discuss measures that could help achieve those goals. While the CBP was able to agree on abundance goals, it was not able to find broad agreement on solutions.

The new multi-year effort signified by the governors' letter will establish processes and decision-making groups to attempt to find solid and practicable solutions to the challenges facing struggling salmon populations.

Northwest RiverPartners is supportive of the goals included in the four governors' letter but asks that the process specifically be tasked with providing scientific rigor. While there are many stakeholders who genuinely believe that dams have been the limiting factor in salmon recovery, recent research has shown that this anti-dam conclusion is not scientifically founded.

Fisheries researcher Lissa Crozer stated that scientists are seeing "Near-synchronous declines" in worldwide salmon populations, likely due to the effects of climate change. These declines include rivers with and without hydroelectric dams.

Two studies released this summer also point to the strong relationship between climate change, warming oceans, and declining Chinook salmon health.

In its recently released [Biological Opinion](#), NOAA Fisheries showed that climate change appears to have a much larger effect on salmon survival in the oceans than in rivers and Chinook salmon may only have 20 to 30 years left in the region if the observed relationships between warming ocean temperatures and salmon survival remain steady.

Pointing to a more hostile ocean environment due to climate change and salmon spending fewer years at sea, scientists at the University of Alaska also found that the size of Chinook salmon in Alaska's rivers had declined significantly since 1960.

Given the widespread nature of the decline in salmon populations, we encourage the governors' process to look more holistically at the shared environment of all Pacific Salmon, which is the Pacific Ocean. We have to reverse ocean warming if we are going to save our iconic salmon and orca species.

Addressing climate change is critical not only in terms of the salmon debate but our region is now also being forced to confront the issue due to the recent and devastating wildfire event which will tragically go down in Oregon history as the most intense ever recorded. In a recent interview on the fires, [Oregon Gov. Kate Brown](#) said "This is a wake-up call for all of us that we've got to do everything in our power to tackle climate change."

We know that hydropower plays a critical role in the Pacific Northwest in our goals to reduce our carbon footprint. Our region has the least carbon-intensive electric service territory and the most affordable renewable power in the nation thanks to its hydropower system.

The governors' process needs to ensure the vitality of the hydropower system as a means to help both salmon and people avoid climate-driven disasters.

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About Northwest RiverPartners

Northwest RiverPartners (NWRP) is a not-for-profit, member-driven organization. We represent not-for-profit, community-owned utilities across Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Nevada. We also proudly represent farmers, ports, and businesses across the region that support clean energy and low-carbon transportation.

NWRP is focused on raising awareness about how the Northwest's hydropower system betters communities and the natural environment, and we encourage

science-based solutions that help hydropower and salmon coexist and thrive. <http://nwriverpartners.org>