



PRESS STATEMENT

**November 24, 2020
Vancouver, WA**

Northwest RiverPartners Disappointed, Concerned Over Gov Brown's Divisive Move Towards Litigation

Nov 24, 2020—Yesterday the State of Oregon sent a 60-day notice of its intent to sue the federal government over its 2020 NOAA Fisheries Biological Opinion on Columbia River System Operations. The NOAA document examined the potential impact on fish and wildlife from proposed hydroelectric operations and found that the recommended operations were consistent with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

Northwest RiverPartners is highly disappointed and concerned by Governor Kate Brown's decision, which threatens a retrenchment in litigation and signals a move away from genuinely collaborative discussions that could benefit salmon, the environment, and Northwest communities.

As a co-convenor of the Four-State Process, and presumably, as one of four parties with the final say in discussion outcomes, it is wholly inappropriate for Oregon to consider simultaneously pursuing litigation on the very same issues.

We fear the Governor's decision will bring our region's ability to have productive conversations to a grinding halt. It is imperative that a collaborative dialogue is upheld and that the region, as a whole, works to restore healthy salmon populations without jeopardizing fair and equitable access to affordable electricity for rural and other vulnerable communities.

It is well known that communities of color and other traditionally disadvantaged groups already carry a higher utility burden than the rest of society. The Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement made clear that the removal of the four lower Snake River dams would greatly increase utility costs, adding further hardship to those who are already struggling to make ends meet during a time of economic crisis.

Further, this threatened litigation ignores a slew of recent scientific studies which convincingly tie salmon declines to poor ocean conditions, due largely to climate change and acidification. These issues cannot be meaningfully addressed by Governor Brown's preferred method of breaching the four lower Snake River dams, and the removal of renewable resources only furthers our climate crisis.

As a result of Oregon's decision, many regional stakeholders are now questioning whether those who hold differing opinions will be welcomed to the table when the Four-State Process begins. If key stakeholders are not included, the legitimacy of the process may be called into question. At a time when collaboration is crucial to making real progress, actions that have the potential to create further division are deeply troubling.

We urge Governor Brown to reconsider Oregon's intent to seek litigation—which is almost certain to set back years' long efforts to bring the region together—if she wants to truly lead a meaningful and collaborative salmon recovery effort.

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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>