



PRESS STATEMENT

**March 4, 2021
Vancouver, WA**

State of Oregon's Decision to Litigate Undermines Hopes for Regional Collaboration on Salmon

Earlier today, the State of Oregon filed a lawsuit in district court over the federal government's latest hydropower operations plan for the Columbia River Basin and the Biological Opinion in support of the plan under the Endangered Species Act.

Ironically, just last week, a spokesperson for Governor Brown helped unveil the Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC). Organized by the governors of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana, the CBC hopes to put an end to litigation and bring the region's sovereign tribes, states, and stakeholder groups together to facilitate recovery of Columbia River Basin salmon and steelhead.

We maintain that the decision to simultaneously pursue litigation while co-leading this process is wholly inappropriate. For the CBC to be successful, diverse stakeholder groups must partner in good faith and with open minds as we look for a holistic approach to salmon recovery. Unfortunately, Governor Brown's decision to reestablish Oregon as a plaintiff places all aspects of this collaborative process in question.

In the CBC kick-off meeting, state representatives spoke of their hope to put differences aside for the good of salmon recovery, but Oregon's choice to litigate means the CBC process won't be given a fair chance to succeed.

As one of the CBC organizers, Oregon will have a distinct say in who gets a seat at the table, the ground rules for participants, and ultimately which policies receive the CBC's stamp of approval. Now, as a plaintiff, the State's decisions must be examined through the lens of its desire to make the strongest legal case possible.

The timing of this litigation also comes as the region considers the proposal put forth by Idaho Rep. Mike Simpson to set aside \$35-40 billion in federal

infrastructure spending to breach the lower Snake River dams. Oregon's actions could potentially have negative implications for those discussions started by the Simpson proposal as well, by encouraging parties to retrench into traditional positions.

Inspired by an updated mission in 2019, Northwest RiverPartners has consistently demonstrated its intention to follow a collaborative path regarding the future of salmon and dams in the Northwest. While we believe that carbon-free, affordable hydropower is essential for the region's clean energy future, we also embrace open-minded discussion and collaborative solutions.

We strongly encourage Governor Brown to put a halt to Oregon's litigation efforts and, instead, make the collaborative process of the CBC, that she helped initiate, a top priority. It is proven that the cycle of endless litigation only achieves division, and salmon can only be recovered if we work together.

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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>