



PRESS STATEMENT

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Vancouver, WA

Northwest RiverPartners Urges Columbia Basin Collaborative to Reevaluate Current Framework; Establish More Equitable, Holistic Approach

Advocacy Group Urges Sincere Collaboration by Requiring Participants to Suspend Litigation Activities

The Columbia Basin Collaborative was introduced last year by the governors of the four Northwest states to help move the region past unending litigation and toward the recovery of threatened and endangered salmon species.

Unfortunately, the Collaborative has failed to live up to its name. Alarming, 19 of the 22 seats not set aside for federal or state agencies are earmarked for organizations that have passed resolutions in favor of breaching the four Lower Snake River dams.

Our members embrace the critical importance of healthy salmon populations for the region's people, most especially recognizing the sacred place of salmon for the Northwest's Tribal Nations. However, the Collaborative's proposed structure does not offer the opportunity for an equitable balance of voices to engage in what should be an intellectually honest discussion about the many factors that influence salmon survival.

Importantly, the Collaborative must start with a baseline that recognizes the threat of climate change to salmon populations, particularly in the ocean environment. A 2021 NOAA Fisheries [study](#) indicates that Chinook salmon may go extinct in less than 60 years if the Pacific Ocean continues to warm at its current rate.

This finding, combined with 2020 [research](#) on the coastwide decline in salmon survival rates make it clear we have a shared responsibility to take a more holistic approach to salmon recovery. In this vein, we believe the Collaborative

has an opportunity to reset, and we urge the effort to do so by adopting the following guiding principles:

- Develop working groups that are balanced and representative of the totality of the region's voices.
- Prioritize holistic solutions that can benefit coastwide salmon populations.
- Require participants, including the State of Oregon as Co-Chair, to drop legal suits as a precondition for being part of this collaborative process.
- Evaluate solutions based on the social cost of carbon and prioritize socioeconomic and health impacts for under-represented and vulnerable communities.
- Recognize the multi-purpose functionality of the hydropower system.

Northwest RiverPartners has consistently demonstrated its intention to follow a collaborative path regarding the future of salmon and dams in the Northwest. Therefore, we urge the Collaborative to commit to finding a more equitable and holistic approach in this critical process. It's time for the states to decide how much they believe in a truly collaborative process.

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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>