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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Science-Based Plan Step in Right Direction

Today the Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation released to the public a draft plan to aid the recovery of Pacific salmon and steelhead stocks listed under the Endangered Species Act. The plan is a significant improvement over past efforts and responds well to concerns raised by U.S. District Court Judge Jim Redden, according to Terry Flores, executive director of the Northwest RiverPartners.

While it is not perfect, the Northwest RiverPartners believe the plan is a step in the right direction and provides a solid foundation for the Biological Opinion NOAA Fisheries will now prepare, she said.

“The federal agencies’ undertook a rigorous scientific status review in preparing this Biological Assessment that is unlike any other done in the past,” Flores stated. “It identifies, for each ESA-listed stock, the specific factors that are limiting its recovery. The salmon lifecycle is exceedingly complex, and all Hs – habitat loss, hydro operations, hatchery interference and killing adult salmon through harvest are all factors that have to be addressed to ensure recovery”, she said.

“Science is the key, and the federal agencies have applied science to the problem in a way that it has never been applied before,” Flores said. “The measures proposed are tailored to what scientific research is telling us the stocks actually need to rebound,” she added.

The federal agencies’ comprehensive science assessment indicates that almost all listed stocks are rebuilding. Citizens and businesses in the Pacific Northwest invest hundreds of millions of dollars every year in salmon protection and recovery, and actions in this plan continue to build on that investment.

The federal agencies have proposed over \$500 million be invested to improve fish passage at the dams over the next 10 years, as well as changes in hydro operations to better help fish get safely up and down stream. They also identify significant new investments – on the order of nearly \$400 million – to protect and restore degraded habitat in tributaries important for fish rearing and spawning.

“While a vast improvement, unfortunately, the Biological Assessment does not apply its rigorous science across the board. It fails to identify needed hatchery reforms and completely ignores the harvest of listed fish, which are identified by expert scientists as major factors limiting the ability of salmon and steelhead to recover. Until the region comes to grips with the inherent conflict between recovering wild salmon and producing hatchery fish for harvest, the job is not yet done,” Flores stated.

RiverPartners urges the federal agencies to put the good science available in the Biological Assessment squarely on the table so the region can have the honest debate that is needed to ensure that listed salmon are recovered, she concluded.

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Northwest RiverPartners is a partnership of farmers, electric utilities and large and small businesses joined together to ensure that the Columbia and Snake rivers remain living, working rivers. Northwest RiverPartners promotes all of the benefits of the rivers: fish and wildlife, renewable hydropower, agriculture, flood control, commerce and recreation. We believe salmon recovery efforts must be cost effective and based in the best science. We support responsible policies that will lead to increased salmon runs and increased economic opportunity for the Pacific Northwest.