



## **Administration Must Signal Strong Support for the BiOp**

When the stakes are high, RiverPartners and its supporters rise to the occasion, as demonstrated by the outpouring of advertisements, Op-Eds and letters to editors saturating newspapers from Grays Harbor to Kalispell and Lewiston to Reedsport.

Our message in support of the 2008 Biological Opinion is clear: **it is time to get salmon out of the courtroom and into the river.**

In May, Judge Redden expressed more reservations about the federal agencies' BiOp. The following week, officials from the Obama Administration came to the Northwest to listen to the region's sovereigns and scientists who developed the salmon plan and decide if they will support it. Their review will conclude in mid-August.



These events convinced us it was time to let the Administration and others know the breadth of the regional support for the BiOp. We are counting on this Administration to send a strong signal to the judge in favor of the BiOp. That signal has the potential to put the Northwest on a positive path toward salmon recovery. Without it, there is great risk of more extensive litigation, involving not just this BiOp, but others covering harvest and the Upper Snake River/Nez Perce agreement, which are linked to it.

We want the President's team to understand the regional context for this BiOp – the decades of rancor it could resolve; the serious sacrifice Northwest families and businesses are making to help recover salmon; and the value of the Northwest hydro system to our economy and clean environment. We also want to make sure the Administration appreciates the connection between the hydro system and national goals to cut carbon emissions and encourage renewable energy.

People here back the plan's science-based approach and the collaboration that went into its development. The Administration ought to value those attributes highly, too. While the \$10 billion BiOp price tag hasn't been easy to swallow, we've accepted it as part of an historic opportunity to bring about a resolution to litigation and provide constructive actions to help fish.

RiverPartners' message has reached the four corners of the Northwest, toting up opinion pieces and letters to editors from utility managers and boards, labor, ports, agriculture, trade groups,

river users, legislators and others. Our members have ponied up to place dozens of ads in the region's newspapers, including most major dailies and many other publications.

Editorial boards, including the Oregonian and Everett Herald, have been moved to endorse our message, and Congressional representatives have reiterated their support. We have garnered coverage on news pages and local TV.

RiverPartners extends its thanks to everyone who has lent their support. The tremendous contribution has helped put our message out there, loud and clear.

The region has a salmon plan accomplished through regional collaboration, based on sound science, and supported by a majority of Northwest states, tribes, federal agencies, and other stakeholders. We have spoken, and we trust the Administration is listening.

There were so many great letters and columns. Here are a few highlights:

- *Continuing the litigation may be an economic stimulus gift to attorneys and may help environmental activists raise millions in donations, but is it good for fish and the people who depend on the two rivers for their livelihoods?*
- *We urge the Administration and our legislators to stand behind the BiOp and seize this historic opportunity to put aside regional divisiveness.*
- *Hydroelectric dams provide the essential back-up for the thousands of megawatts of renewable wind power being installed in our region.*
- *Our challenge is to establish the best science-based policy we can in a contest that is nothing more than a thinly veiled effort on the part of a few opponents to remove four federal dams on the Snake River.*
- *The loss of the dams would also remove the "river highway" requiring thousands of trucks to move the agricultural products now shipped by barge.*
- *Now is not the time to build a new debate hall. Now is the time to end the debate, get out of the courtroom, get behind the BiOp, and focus the region's attention on the on-the-ground recovery actions that will rebuild the fish runs.*
- *This extraordinary and collaborative effort . . . to craft a credible salmon recovery plan is unprecedented and certainly a welcome change from years of court battles.*

*Northwest River Partners is an alliance of farmers, utilities, ports and businesses that promote the economic and environmental benefits of the Columbia and Snake Rivers and salmon recovery policies based on sound science. For more information, please visit [www.nwriverpartners.org](http://www.nwriverpartners.org).*