



The 2011 View Upstream

RiverPartners is off and running on another busy year. Bolstered by the collaboration and good relationships we've nurtured over the past five years, we are ready for 2011. Here are a few of the issues on our plate:

Litigation Goes On...And On. The Yogi Berra saying "It's déjà vu all over again" certainly applies when it comes to litigation over the federal hydro system Biological Opinion (BiOp). Many of us expected to see a ruling from Judge Redden in 2008 when \$1 billion in funding was added to the salmon plan; then again in 2009 when the Administration endorsed the science; and again in 2010. Procedural issues caused further delays, and we are now in the midst of yet another round of briefing. It ends in February, followed by a hearing before the Judge, and, we hope, a favorable ruling.



But No Delay Here. Even while the BiOp remains in court, implementation of measures continues fast apace. Salmon passage improvements are now in place at ALL the federal dams on the lower Columbia and Snake rivers. They are expensive (\$51 million for a spill wall at The Dalles dam) but are boosting young fish survivals. For example, at Little Goose dam, yearling [fish migrating downstream through the fish slide survive at 99 percent!](#)

And implementation of \$100 million annually in state and tribal habitat "Accord" projects is under way. RiverPartners supports on-the-ground measures. But we will keep a sharp eye out, and participate in the NW Power and Conservation Council's project review process, to ensure they are science-based and providing real benefits to salmon.

Willamette Watchdog. We are also keeping tabs on the BiOp for 13 dams on the Willamette River in Oregon. The primary purpose of these projects is to protect the Willamette Valley from floods. Eight of the dams produce about 180 megawatts of energy and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) customers pay a percentage of the fish costs, the Army Corps of Engineers pays the rest. We want to make sure power customers don't end up paying more than their fair share.

On the wildlife side of the picture, BPA signed an agreement with Oregon last October that committed \$175 million in the basin over 15 years. While we understand BPA's desire to fulfill mitigation obligations, RiverPartners questioned the timing, high price, and value during these tough economic times.

State Budgets in Crisis. No one is safe when the legislature is in town, and that seems truer than ever in 2011. Washington and Oregon are both facing massive budget problems, and proposals for deep funding cuts and agency consolidations abound. Some could affect salmon recovery efforts, and BPA provides an easy target and deep pocket for those looking for new revenue. We will be on the alert and working closely with trade allies who cover the state sessions as legislators grapple with huge money issues.

Year of Dam Attacks. American Rivers declared 2011 its Year of River Restoration, pointing to removal of the Elwha and Condit dams in Washington. We expect the rhetoric will amp up this year as dam-breaching groups aim their video cameras and use these events to raise funds for their Snake River dam removal campaign. RiverPartners will be ready to protect and promote the clean, green Columbia/Snake river power system, which is the envy of the rest of the country.

Other issues and opportunities will surface throughout the year. As they do, RiverPartners is ready to address them on behalf of the families and businesses that depend on a healthy power system and the vital commercial link provided by the inland waterway.



Terry Flores is Executive Director of Northwest River Partners, 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.