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Northwest RiverPartners Statement on Elwha and Condit Dam Removals

Portland, OR 9-14-2011 - While some activist groups are trying to rationalize the back-to-back removal of the Elwha and Condit projects into an argument for removing the Snake River dams, there simply is no comparison.

“The public really understands the difference between these small, antiquated dams and the Snake River dams as evidenced by our public opinion polling where opposition to removing the Snake dams is overwhelming with 74% of the public finding it an ‘extreme solution,’” said Terry Flores, Executive Director of Northwest RiverPartners. “Furthermore, our polling research shows opposition to removing the Snake River dams has actually increased over past years.”

The facts show that the outmoded Elwha and Condit dams are simply not in the same league as the Snake River dams:

- Their power output is only 0.5% of that of the Snake dams;
- They lack fish passage -- the Snake River dams have sophisticated technological upgrades that are getting salmon safely up and downstream;
- They are of economic insignificance, whereas the Snake dams provide a waterborne corridor that moves 10 million tons of cargo worth \$19 billion a year and provides thousands of jobs;
- They don't contribute to food production, whereas the Snake dams provide vital irrigation to farmers in Idaho and eastern Washington and Oregon to grow the crops that feed Northwest residents and are exported to the world.

Flores went on to say that all the attention focused on these dam removals is an occasion for everyone to reflect upon the extraordinary legacy of hydropower in the Northwest: “Hydropower provides upwards of 60 percent of the Northwest’s energy, and it is a clean, non-polluting, renewable source of energy that makes us far less dependent than the rest of the country on electricity from coal, natural gas or nuclear plants – and keeps our carbon footprint about half that of the rest of the nation.”

“In addition, since the wind doesn’t always blow, but the rivers always flow, our hydropower system is a consistent energy source to fill in the gap when wind turbines are not spinning,” Flores added.

Northwest RiverPartners is an alliance of farmers, ports, utilities and businesses that promote the environmental and economic benefits of the Columbia and Snake River systems and salmon protection policies based in sound science.