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Obama administration affirms science in salmon plan for Columbia-Snake

Northwest RiverPartners, an alliance of Columbia and Snake River users, echoed the administration's call today for getting out of the courtroom and moving forward with the work of helping the listed fish runs on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

“This plan – while expensive – holds the most promise for the region to move forward collectively to do things that actually benefit fish,” said Terry Flores, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, following the Obama administration's affirmation that the 2008 salmon plan is legally and scientifically sound.

Flores noted that Judge James Redden and the environmental and fish litigants invited the administration's review on the legality and science of the plan and should give great weight to the administration's conclusions, which are based on exhaustive review of the plan by independent scientists.

In addition to supporting the science, the administration embraced the collaborative approach taken to develop the plan – and to continue it throughout the plan's 10 years of implementation.

Flores said RiverPartners endorsement of the plan hasn't been easy, because of concerns over the \$10 billion price tag which Northwest families and businesses will be shouldering through their electric bills. “We support restoring wild salmon runs and experience shows that dams and fish are co-existing, but this is an unprecedented costs people are being asked to bear in extremely tough economic times” she said.

Northwest RiverPartners expressed deep disappointment and frustration over the administration putting, once again, discussion of destroying the four Snake River dams on the table.

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“Even talking about destroying the dams is nonsensical. Removal is an extreme and polarizing action that is not supported by the public or the science,” Flores said, noting that it also runs counter to the administration’s own goals to promote renewable resource development and reduce carbon emissions. ”The administration should not take any steps that continue to keep this divisive issue on the table” she added.

“Dam destruction already has been extensively studied and rejected; doing so again is a waste of time and money,” she said. “It may not help and may even harm the four runs of listed fish on the Snake and, in fact, is counterproductive because it would take away resources from efforts to protect all of the listed runs.”

“Furthermore, the Snake dams provide vast amounts of carbon-free energy – enough to power a city the size of Seattle,” Flores said, noting that fossil fuel plants emitting 4.4 million tons of carbon dioxide annually would be required to replace the dams.

“Opponents of the new salmon plan conveniently choose to ignore these facts and have only escalated their efforts,” Flores said. “It is time to stop listening to extreme advocates whose only real agenda is destroying dams and fundraising.”

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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.