

## **Terry Flores: The administration joins the majority on salmon plan**

BY TERRY FLORES - Idaho Statesman

Published: 09/20/09

President Obama's top biological scientist, who is the administrator of NOAA, and her advisers have validated the legal and biological basis of the 2008 salmon plan following in the footsteps of two previous administrations.

They join the vast majority of Northwest leaders, including three governors, seven Indian tribes and most members of Congress, as well as citizens of Columbia and Snake river communities.

The administration embraced and committed to continuing the collaborative approach taken in the plan's development - key to moving away from divisive litigation that has been hampering salmon efforts for nearly two decades. The people and fish of the Northwest deserve no less.

Yet the very people who asked the administration for this review are rejecting the outcome and will attempt to hold the fish hostage in the courtroom rather than giving great weight to the administration's support and call for moving forward.

Northwest RiverPartners, an alliance of communities and businesses relying on the Columbia and Snake rivers, supports restoring wild salmon runs. Experience shows this can be done without destroying our economy.

Our support for this salmon plan does not come lightly given the hefty price tag for families and businesses in Idaho and the Northwest. The salmon plan is unprecedented in its cost - nearly \$1 billion will be spent every year - as much as 20 percent of a typical electric bill.

We are confident that the plan now before Judge James Redden will help salmon and steelhead, rendering unnecessary the potential path to destroying the lower Snake River dams. Although characterized as a last resort, it is an extreme and polarizing action unsupported by the public or the science.

Removal is opposed by 70 percent of Idahoans according to a 2009 public opinion poll. It may not help and may even harm the four Snake River listed runs and does nothing for the other nine listed runs.

These dams provide vast amounts of carbon-free energy, and replacing it with fossil fuel generation would emit 4.4 million tons of carbon dioxide annually. The dams create an economic superhighway - the Port of Lewiston is the gateway for billions of dollars of goods and crops heading downriver, and thousands of port jobs are created.

The plan endorsed by the Obama administration holds the most promise for moving forward collectively. It is time to get out of the courtroom and on with the work of implementing a plan solidly based on science.

Terry Flores is executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, based in Portland, Ore.