

***Kootenai Tribe of Idaho \* Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation \* the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes \* the State of Montana \* the State of Idaho\* the State of Washington \* Northwest RiverPartners***

May 12, 2009

Dr. Jane Lubchenco  
Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere  
Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

We are writing as a Northwest coalition of sovereign and river interests who have been deeply involved in the collaborative process to develop a new Biological Opinion (BiOp) for the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). We have worked closely together as a coalition for nearly four years and represent diverse upper- and lower- river issues and interests. We write collectively to urge you, and the Administration, to support this BiOp which is right now putting proven on-the-ground measures in place to help set the Northwest's 13 listed salmon and steelhead species on a path toward recovery while balancing the ecosystem needs of the entire Columbia River Basin.

This BiOp enjoys unprecedented regional support and represents a new era of cooperation and collaboration amongst a majority of Northwest tribes, states and river interests. Indeed, this BiOp is unprecedented in every way: it was developed collaboratively by the Northwest's sovereigns, involves the use of the best available science and will see an extraordinary investment by the region in measures to provide demonstrable benefits to the listed species.

This BiOp includes an analysis of all the factors impeding salmon recovery throughout their lifecycle and incorporates measures tailored to each listed stock. It also includes provisions for ongoing collaboration and adaptive management. These provisions will ensure continued review, incorporation of the latest scientific information, and monitoring throughout the life of the BiOp. Specifying the process going forward, and the committed involvement of the parties, will help ensure that the BiOp's rigorous performance standards are met, including any necessary adjustments to the recovery processes that the science may demand.

In short, this BiOp is legally and scientifically sound and represents more agreement on the issue of listed salmon and steelhead than has perhaps ever existed in the Northwest. We ask for, and need, your leadership to recognize this incredible opportunity to set differences aside and move forward collectively with salmon recovery in the Northwest.

Thank you for your consideration of our collective view on this matter.