



“Navigating the Challenges of the River System”

An enthusiastic crowd of nearly one hundred attended Northwest RiverPartners’ informational forum October 10th in Kennewick, Washington. Participants heard resounding support from Washington’s governor, members of Congress and regional fish and energy experts who praised the clean renewable hydroelectric energy and economic values provided by the region’s Columbia and Snake Rivers.

In a video appearance before the forum, Governor Christine Gregoire welcomed participants and said, “I’d like to thank RiverPartners for their commitment to recovering and restoring fish populations,” describing the system as “one of the Northwest’s most valued natural and economic resources.”

“The Columbia and Snake Rivers provide thousands of jobs and millions of dollars to the local economy every year. The rivers also serve as a transportation corridor that moves more than \$16 billion worth of cargo every year.”



And, citing the current challenge of the litigation on the federal biological opinions, the governor praised the work of Northwest RiverPartners. “You’ve been our partner as we share the same vision to protect our future resources.”

U.S. Representative Doc Hastings, who represents Eastern Washington, told participants, “Our region needs more people at the table who understand that annual hydropower output is equivalent to the energy produced from 200 million barrels of oil – that hydropower is more efficient than any other form of electricity generation and that hydropower offsets more carbon emissions than all other renewable energy sources combined.”

“I have long supported policies that I believe fit well with Northwest RiverPartners’ appropriate motto of ‘Green Dams, Blue Skies,’” Hastings said, including “promoting the value of clean, renewable, non-polluting hydropower dams.”

Witt Anderson, director of programs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, provided details on “the overhaul” of the Federal Columbia River Power System for fish, noting that salmon survival through the dams is nearly three times higher than in the mid-to-late 1970s and similar to levels before the Snake River dams were built.

The overhaul includes new fish “slides” at six of the federal dams, spill deflectors at 7 of 8 dams, improvements in fish transport around the dams and turbine advancements. Another \$500 million will be invested in the next ten years to ensure safe travel through the dams for young migrating salmon and steelhead.

U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris-Rodgers, whose district includes the Tri-Cities, described her continuing efforts to have Congress classify hydropower as a renewable resource.

“Dams provide two-thirds of Washington State’s electricity. Yet today in Congress, there are members advocating for removal of...the four lower Snake River dams,” she said. “It would take three nuclear, six coal-fired or 14 gas-fired power plants to provide capacity equal to the four dams.”

The forum also heard Anita Decker, chief operating officer for the Bonneville Power Administration on the agency’s climate change initiatives; and Colonel Miroslav Kurka, deputy commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Northwest Division.

John Saven, chairman of Northwest RiverPartners provided closing remarks: “RiverPartners believes in the application of the best available science in pursuing actions that have a demonstrated value in protecting endangered fish runs. We also want to sustain the economic vitality of the Columbia/Snake river system for electricity generation, transportation, flood control, irrigation and recreational uses.”

“We will do our part individually to support this cause. And, we are particularly thankful to our elected officials that are willing to stand up to support the underlying beliefs we hold. Our voices need to be heard, which requires collective action through our local utilities, port districts, small and large businesses, associations of farmers and bargaining groups and other organizations representing commerce.”

The forum was the second Northwest RiverPartners has held around the region to inform its members, local communities and the public on river and salmon recovery issues.

Witt Anderson of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presented this PowerPoint at the recent Forum in the TriCities: [Columbia River Salmon and Federal Columbia River Power System](#).

Northwest RiverPartners is a partnership of farmers, electric utilities and large and small businesses in the Pacific Northwest, joined together to ensure that the Columbia and Snake rivers remain living, working rivers. It was founded on the belief that these rivers are the Northwest’s greatest natural resource providing residents with clean, affordable and renewable electricity, flood control, irrigation for our farm lands, healthy fish and wildlife, maritime trade, and a multitude of recreational opportunities. For more information, please visit www.nwriverpartners.org.