



For immediate release
Portland, Oregon – 5/20/2010

Contact: Scott Corwin
503-807-3875

Obama Administration Improved Salmon Plan the Best Path Forward for Salmon

Today, as ordered by federal court, the Obama Administration issued a supplemental plan for operation of the federal hydroelectric system on the Columbia and Snake Rivers with respect to salmon and steelhead recovery. This improved plan takes into account the latest scientific information including climate change and impact of toxics, and incorporates safety net and other adaptive management measures aimed at strengthening the initial plan issued in 2008. After three months of analysis and peer review, NOAA Fisheries has found that the plan issued today, called the 2010 Supplemental Biological Opinion, is legally and biologically sound, and provides strong protection for Northwest salmon and steelhead.

“The Obama Administration’s latest effort continues to rely on and incorporate the best available science – a practice we have long supported in our salmon mitigation and recovery efforts,” said Scott Corwin, Executive Director of the Public Power Council. “The additional information and measures included in this supplemental plan will fine tune our salmon mitigation and recovery efforts as defined by the 2008 Biological Opinion.”

The 2008 Biological Opinion was the result of an impressive collaborative effort spanning several years and involving the Northwest states, Northwest Tribes and the federal agencies with responsibility for Columbia River basin salmon. That effort produced a comprehensive salmon recovery plan that enjoys broad regional support and includes an unprecedented financial commitment on behalf of consumer-owned utilities and their customers.

Salmon recovery efforts in the Columbia River Basin represent approximately 30 percent of the costs of power purchased by consumer-owned utilities from the Bonneville Power Administration. The 2008 Biological Opinion and the supplemental plan released today will increase an already unprecedented investment in salmon recovery efforts to as much as \$1 billion annually – a strong commitment on behalf of the residential and business customers of consumer-owned utilities region-wide even during tough economic times.

“It is time for the federal court to approve this plan and for the region to begin the process of implementation. Approving the 2010 Supplemental Biological Opinion is in the best interests of the salmon and steelhead we all want to protect,” said Corwin.

While we endorse this improved plan, we are concerned that a recent decision to deviate from the plan and spill water over the dams to test whether this action will aid young salmon migration during low in-river flows sets a bad precedent and could harm the fish. Best available science supports use of barges to aid salmon migration during low water years. In fact, the best science shows that 50 percent of returning adult steelhead may be lost in low in-river flow conditions by spilling this year.

“Any deviation from use of the best available science risks the health of salmon and steelhead runs and is a practice we wholeheartedly oppose,” said Corwin

Consumer-owned utilities in the Northwest remain committed to the 2008 Biological Opinion and today’s supplement – the 2010 Supplemental Biological Opinion - as the best path forward for stable salmon runs and salmon recovery efforts.

PPC represents Pacific Northwest consumer-owned utilities on issues related to the Federal Columbia River Power System.