

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 16, 2006

Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
1401 Constitution Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Admiral Lautenbacher:

As you have acknowledged, restoring wild salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake River Basin is an issue of vital importance and a national priority. These fish have enormous historic and cultural value to our nation, as well as iconic status in the Pacific Northwest. They also represent a significant economic resource upon which many communities depend. Extinction of these fish, or mere "museum piece" survival, is not a viable option for our nation's economy, culture, or environment. We urge you to join us in working to restore self-sustaining, harvestable populations of wild salmon to the Columbia and Snake rivers.

This effort must be guided by the best available economics and science. We have spent more than \$5 billion in federal taxpayer and Northwest ratepayer dollars in an attempt to mitigate the impacts of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) on our nation's salmon resources. The 2004 FCRPS Biological Opinion, recently invalidated by a federal court, required an increased expenditure of nearly \$6 billion to fully implement. Yet last year, many of the Columbia and Snake's salmon populations were at levels even lower than they were when they were first listed under the Endangered Species Act in the early 1990s. And for several stocks of Pacific salmon, current returns are shaping up to be even worse.

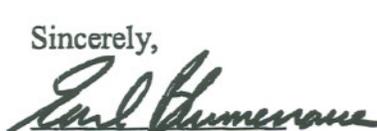
Your agency now has an opportunity to help resolve long-running controversies over the future of Columbia and Snake Basin salmon and steelhead by crafting a scientifically and economically sound plan that not only protects these fish, but also restores them to self-sustaining, harvestable levels. Only a plan that meets this goal will ensure a return on our substantial investment in salmon recovery while protecting and enhancing the economies of communities that depend on this resource. And only a plan that achieves this goal will meet the requirements of federal law while honoring the treaty commitments made by the United States to the Columbia Basin Tribes of the Northwest and to the government of Canada, ensuring that these species will be protected and restored.

For these reasons, we urge that all scientifically credible options – including modified versions of present policies, partial removal of the four dams on the lower Snake River, and acquisition of significant additional water for flow augmentation – be considered with equal rigor and seriousness. We also urge you to ensure that your agency uses the best available science and economics to craft this plan so that we are not faced yet again with legal battles over the adequacy of the analysis or the feasibility of its implementation.

It is time we get salmon recovery on the right track—we cannot delay any longer. We must take this opportunity to restore these fish to self-sustaining, harvestable levels. Given the current weak status of many salmon and steelhead stocks in the Columbia-Snake Basin, as well as constrained federal fiscal resources, achieving this goal will require recovery actions that are more effective and cost-efficient than those outlined in the past.

Without prompt and impartial consideration of all scientifically credible and economically viable alternatives, we risk squandering our already significant investment in salmon recovery, breaching our treaty commitments and losing one of this nation's important natural resources: the wild salmon and steelhead of the Columbia-Snake Basin.

Sincerely,

  
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Member of Congress

  
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Member of Congress

  
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Member of Congress

  
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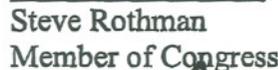
  
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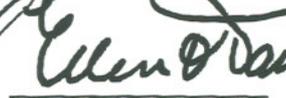
  
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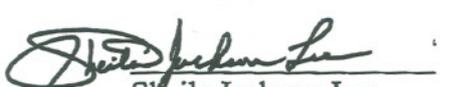
  
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06-16-06

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Columbia-Snake Salmon Letter  
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