

The region has shown that it can increase salmon survival and maintain the benefits of the federal dams



Federal Columbia River Power System BiOp

2014 Supplemental FCRPS Biological Opinion Remanded

In May 2016, Judge Michael Simon of the United States District Court issued his ruling on the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion (BiOp) lawsuit. While Judge Simon left the current BiOp in place, he found that federal agencies must produce an updated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and deliver a new Biological Opinion by March 1, 2018.

PNWA and IPNG support the federal plan

PNWA manages the Inland Ports and Navigation Group (IPNG), a subset of PNWA's membership. IPNG has been an intervenor in the BiOp lawsuit, supporting the work of the federal agencies and submitting information to the Court regarding the views of the port and navigation sector.

Background

In the midst of record returns for many of the Northwest's salmon runs, NOAA Fisheries released the Supplemental Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion (BiOp) in January 2014. The 2014 BiOp was the product of the best available science, as well as significant collaboration between the federal agencies, four states and sovereign Northwest tribes.

In June 2014, Earthjustice once again filed a complaint on behalf of a group of environmental and fishing groups against NOAA Fisheries challenging the BiOp. The Court heard oral arguments in June 2015, which included remarks by IPNG's attorney.

A balanced approach to fish and dams

Northwest ports and navigation interests have always strongly supported robust salmon recovery efforts that preserve the multiple uses of the river system. PNWA believes, like most in the scientific community, that salmon runs have been affected by a variety of factors. A commitment to improving all four of the "H's" of salmon recovery - hydro, habitat, harvest, and hatcheries - is necessary for listed species to recover. Extreme measures like dam breaching have been studied and rejected numerous times over the last twenty years. The dramatic increase in fish returns over the last ten years demonstrates the success of regional investments in fish passage, habitat, and other river improvements.

Navigation and hydropower are clean, efficient and economical. Hydropower produces no greenhouse gasses, does not contribute to climate change, and is necessary for integrating wind and solar power into the regional energy system.

Barging along the 365-mile inland Columbia Snake River System is the cleanest and most fuel efficient mode of transportation. Breaching dams would end barge navigation and significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions due to freight transportation.

On the horizon

The 2014 BiOp had unprecedented support in the region, was deemed scientifically sound by the Obama Administration, and helped produce record fish runs. PNWA looks forward to supporting the work of our federal partners as they work to produce the new BiOp due to the court in 2018.