



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Research by Columbia Riverkeeper Undermines Federal Legislation Aimed at Rolling Back Salmon Recovery

August 14, 2017 (Hood River, OR) — As some federal legislators move to stifle salmon recovery and science, Columbia Riverkeeper today released new research on how the Snake River dams affect water temperature and salmon migration. In 2015, hot water killed 250,000 sockeye salmon in the Columbia River basin.ⁱ

“Columbia Riverkeeper’s report highlights why the new, court-ordered federal dam management plan that the Army Corps and other federal agencies are currently writing must contain effective steps to address water temperature, including Snake River dam removal. The new dam management plan should rely on river temperature expertise and data from the EPA, the agency that developed the model on which Columbia Riverkeeper’s report is based,” said Todd True, an attorney at Earthjustice who represents conservation and fishing interests in on-going litigation to restore wild salmon in the Snake and Columbia rivers.

Despite the record-breaking temperatures and fish kills in 2015, Columbia Riverkeeper’s study reveals that the Lower Snake River would have remained cooler than 68 °F—the temperature threshold for salmon migration—if the lower four Snake River dams had been removed. Columbia Riverkeeper used a peer-reviewed computer model developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to predict river temperature in a Snake River without the four lower dams.

Read Columbia Riverkeeper’s [white paper](#) and [supporting documents](#).

Columbia Riverkeeper’s study arrives as some Members of Congress—including Rep. McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-OR)—are pushing legislation to roll back efforts to restore salmon in the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Proposed [H.R. 3144](#) would block federal agencies from taking court-mandated steps to help endangered salmon migrate past the dams. The bill would also prohibit federal scientists from even studying whether to remove the four obsolete Lower Snake River dams.

"Columbia Riverkeeper's report shows that restoring the historic Snake River by removing its costly, deadly dams is one of the most beneficial actions we can take to address climate change and protect wild salmon and steelhead facing extinction in the years ahead," said Sam Mace, Inland Northwest Project Director for the Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition, Spokane, WA. "H.R. 3144's head-in-the-ground approach to salmon restoration is a death knell for the Snake River's wild fish; the bill would even prevent studying proven restoration options like lower Snake River dam removal and additional spill."

About Columbia Riverkeeper

Columbia Riverkeeper's mission is to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. For more information go to columbiariverkeeper.org.

About Earthjustice

Earthjustice represents fishing and conservation plaintiffs in cases to protect and recover Snake and Columbia river salmon. For more information go to earthjustice.org.

About Save Our Wild Salmon

Save Our Wild Salmon is a coalition of conservation, commercial and sportfishing, clean energy, and business associations working together to protect and restore healthy, fishable populations of wild salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake river basins for the benefit of people and ecosystems. For more information go to wildsalmon.org

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ⁱ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Defendant's Answer to Complaint in Columbia Riverkeeper et al. v. Scott Pruitt et al.*, Case No. 2:17-cv-00289-RSM, p.2 (May 15, 2017) (EPA admits that "the death of roughly 250,000 adult sockeye salmon [in 2015] was attributable primarily to warm water").