



Heads Up on Fish and Wildlife

PNUCC - September 2008

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council issued its draft fish and wildlife program in early September. PNUCC weighed in on this draft at the first public hearing September 16 in Astoria.

The changes to the Program that we advocated for in May and letters of support from the utility community have had an impact on the Program. Let's keep the momentum going! I encourage you to attend one of the public hearings (see the attached schedule) and help us underscore the following points:

- ♣ The Council has drafted the Program as a high-level guidance document, without prescriptive requirements. We agree with that approach. The Council is the entity best situated to take in the big picture and set a coherent policy course for fish and wildlife mitigation in the region.
- ♣ We support the Council's emphasis on independent science and use of the Independent Science Review Panel and the Independent Science Advisory Board to assess projects proposed for funding. We agree with the Council's intention that all projects, including those proposed to meet the FCRPS Biological Opinion and BPA's Columbia River Fish Accords, are subject to science review. It's the best way to assure our investments are sound and will pay off for fish and wildlife.
- ♣ Research, monitoring, and evaluation now make up 40 percent of the cost to implement the Council's Program. This takes dollars away from measures on the ground that go directly to help fish. We are urging the Council to find efficiencies to get to a Program that has less than 20 percent of its costs going to research, monitoring and evaluation work.
- ♣ The Council is more explicit about the challenges of harvest and hatcheries and the issues the region must tackle. Harvest and hatcheries have a huge impact on fish but are tough to address. We commend the Council for taking them on in the draft Program and are encouraging them to continue to press for more accountability in these arenas.
- ♣ As the Council considers wildlife mitigation we are asking them to look back and give credit for what has been accomplished since the Program began. This latest draft does not acknowledge the significant accomplishments for wildlife over the last 25 years. And as they add up the benefits we want them to also include the

benefits that have accrued through numerous projects, like fish habitat restoration.

- ♣ The draft Program calls for continued operation of the Fish Passage Center. The Center has lost credibility and is a divisive presence in the Program. We are urging the Council to remove specific references to the Center and instead describe the functions of such an entity.

Besides going to one of the public hearings I encourage you to email or write to the Council by October 30. Instructions for electronically submitting or mailing them are at www.nwcouncil.org. PNUCC will provide detailed input on the points included here as well as others. Let me know if I can offer any further information to help you shape your thoughts.

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