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OREGON



WASHINGTON

January 25, 2018

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
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Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
1111 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
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Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Suzan DelBene
Beutler
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Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Denny Heck
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Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jaime Herrera
1107 Longworth Office Building
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The Honorable Pramila Jayapal
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The Honorable Derek Kilmer
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The Honorable Raúl R Labrador
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The Honorable Rick Larsen
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The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
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The Honorable Dan Newhouse
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The Honorable David G. Riechert
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The Honorable Kurt Schrader
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Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
2084 Rayburn Office Building

The Honorable Adam Smith
2264 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
2184 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Northwest House Delegation Members:

As Governors that are working to recover Columbia basin salmon and steelhead, we urge you to support legislation aimed at reducing sea lion predation on threatened and endangered and other at-risk fish populations. Although several hundred million dollars are invested annually to rebuild these native fish runs, their health and sustainability is threatened unless Congress acts to enhance protection from increasing sea lion predation.

Over the last decade, predation by sea lions on salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, and lamprey in the Columbia River has increased dramatically. State researchers have estimated that sea lions consume about 20 percent of the entire spring Chinook run. More recent year research by NOAA Fisheries has found that up to 45 percent of spring Chinook adult salmon disappear between the estuary and Bonneville Dam. Much of that loss can be attributed to sea lions.

The risk is not unique to spring Chinook. Oregon scientists have concluded that wild winter steelhead are at extreme risk of extinction if the current rate of sea lion predation continues in the Willamette River. Additionally, Columbia River sturgeon are being impacted by sea lion predation at alarming rates.

It's hard to imagine successful recovery of threatened and endangered fish populations with these high levels of interception by sea lions.

H.R. 2083, the Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Protection Act, augments existing state, federal, and tribal authorities and allows quicker and more efficient intervention but still limits lethal removal. Hopefully, both parties can agree on a version of this bill that will gain broad bipartisan support in the Senate as well as the House.

No one wants to harm these great marine mammals, but effectively dealing with a small fraction of the healthy sea lion population is preferable to losing unique and irreplaceable species of salmon.

Sincerely,



C. L. "Butch" Otter
Governor
State of Idaho



Kate Brown
Governor
State of Oregon



Jay Inslee
Governor
State of Washington