



American Fisheries Society

Western Division

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Western Division of the American Fisheries Society Considers the Four Lower Snake River Dams a Threat to the Continued Existence of Salmon, Steelhead, Lamprey and Sturgeon

Portland, Or. –The Western Division of American Fisheries Society (WDAFS) announced that it has passed a resolution acknowledging that based on the best available scientific information, the four lower Snake River dams and reservoirs present a significant threat to the continued existence of remaining wild fish populations. It goes on to say that if society wishes to save and restore these endangered species, “then a significant portion of the lower Snake River must be returned to a free-flowing condition by breaching the four lower Snake River dams[.]” The resolution is a revision of one adopted in 1999, and passed with 86.4% approval of the independent group of scientists throughout the Western US. Full text of the resolution will soon be available on the WDAFS website (www.wdafs.org).

The revisions addressed conditions that have occurred since 1999, indicating that although some salmon runs have experienced increases and even record returns, that these large pulses are dominated by hatchery fish instead of wild ones; and that more has been recently learned about the role of these dams and reservoirs in reducing populations of other native fish such as sturgeon and lamprey, as well as the listed salmon and steelhead.

“This resolution simply tells it like it is from the science perspective: if we want to save Snake River salmon, we have to remove the four lower Snake River dams. There’s just no two-ways around that scientific fact,” said Don Chapman, fisheries biologist and former biologist with the Idaho Department of Fish & Game.

“Let’s hope the scientists’ call for removal of the four lower Snake River dams is heeded by this Administration” Said Doug DeHart, former Fisheries Chief at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and fisheries biologist, “This scientific backing is necessary for the fate of these fish, but it is also necessary for the fate our salmon fisheries and the jobs and the communities those fish support.”

The resolution follows previous AFS assessments in 2004 and 2009 of the federal Biological Opinion regarding Columbia and Snake River salmon policy. Those assessments also indicated

that restoration of natural river conditions where the four lower Snake River dams occur has the highest likelihood of recovering wild salmon and steelhead.

“I’m proud to be an AFS member today” said Chapman. “To stand up against the political forces trying to silence the science on this issue isn’t easy; this call for dam removal and the previous thorough critiques of the current plan show that the members of AFS have strong principals and serious integrity.”

Established in 1870, the American Fisheries Society is the world’s oldest and largest organization dedicated to strengthening the fisheries profession, advancing fisheries science, and conserving fisheries resources. The Western Division represents about 3,500 fishery scientists from 13 states and 3 Canadian provinces and territories, encompassing the entire Columbia River basin.

The resolution comes in advance of a Federal judges’ ruling on the legality of the current federal government’s Biological Opinion regarding wild salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake River system.