



October 12, 2017

House Committee on Natural Resources
ATTN: Water, Power, and Oceans Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: October 12 hearing on H.R. 3144 in WPO Subcommittee

Dear Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, Subcommittee Chair Lamborn,
and Ranking Subcommittee Member Huffman,

The Sierra Club wishes to express our strong opposition to H.R. 3144, being heard on October 12 in the Water, Power, and Oceans Subcommittee. This bill, if passed, would thwart efforts to deliver critical near-term protections for endangered wild salmon, derail the court-ordered NEPA environmental review and increase uncertainty for Northwest citizens and businesses. We ask you to actively oppose this harmful legislation to ensure that it does not become law.

Wild salmon and steelhead are a Northwest birthright. They are essential to the culture and economy of our region's Native American Tribes and support tens of thousands of non-tribal fishing jobs in urban and rural communities on the West Coast and in Idaho. Salmon also play an irreplaceable ecological role as an indicator species reflecting the health of our rivers and watersheds. Their presence benefits more than 130 other species, including critically-endangered, prey-deficient Southern Resident Orcas.

H.R. 3144 is based on misinformation, fails to recognize the important role wild salmon and steelhead play for Northwest communities and ecosystems, and would severely undermine ongoing and much-needed protection efforts. If passed into law, H.R. 3144 would reverse the May 2016 U.S. District court decision that found the federal agencies' most recent plan for managing federal dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers violated the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, and it would not protect wild salmon and steelhead from extinction. Three different federal judges have now rejected five consecutive Columbia Basin salmon plans over the past two decades. This failure has cost regional energy

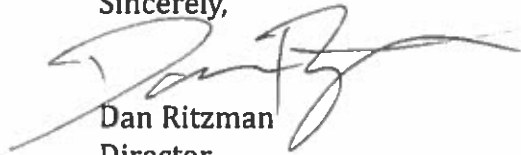
consumers and federal taxpayers more than \$10 billion without recovering a single endangered salmon population.

H.R. 3144 would lock in the inadequate and illegal 2014 Columbia Basin Biological Opinion, fatally stifle the court order to complete a full, fair NEPA environmental review, and prevent an increase in spring "spill" (water releases over the tops of dams to improve survival of out-migrating juvenile salmon) beginning in 2018. Ordered by the court earlier this year and being collaboratively planned by the parties to the litigation this past summer, spill is widely recognized by experts as our most effective immediate tool to help endangered salmon while our region develops a new, legally valid, scientifically-credible plan.

Salmon and fishing advocates share the frustration of many stakeholders with this history of costly and ineffective plans to revive culturally and economically important salmon populations in the Columbia-Snake Basin. We are ready to work with others in the region to develop a plan that protects and recovers endangered salmon and steelhead while also meeting the needs of affected interests.

H.R. 3144, however, will not move our region in that direction; rather it will move us away from a real opportunity to craft a durable, responsible solution. The Sierra Club strongly opposes this bill and urges members of this committee to do the same. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Ritzman", written over a horizontal line.

Dan Ritzman
Director
Lands, Water and Wildlife