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**LARRY CRAIG**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
January 25, 2006

Mike Tracy (208) 342-7985  
Dan Whiting (202) 224-8078

## **CRAIG REACTS TO CONNAUGHTON SPEECH**

**Challenges stakeholders to come together, tackle tough questions in salmon debate**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig reacted to today’s speech by James Connaughton, Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, in which Connaughton laid out a framework for salmon recovery in the Pacific Northwest’s Columbia and Snake River systems.

Connaughton proposed scaling back hatchery operations and limiting the harvest of endangered stocks of salmon. “We cannot improperly hatch and we cannot carelessly catch the wild salmon back to recovery,” Connaughton said.

Senator Craig issued his own statement in reaction. Excerpts are included below, and the full statement is available through the website version of this release:  
<http://craig.senate.gov/releases/pr012506a.htm>.

“Today, Jim Connaughton called for a comprehensive and collaborative approach to salmon recovery in the Pacific Northwest,” Craig said. “While I may not agree completely with Chairman Connaughton’s statement, we must stop ignoring what is going on. It’s about time that someone speaks out about the reality of the situation in the Northwest in regards to salmon recovery...There has been no clear direction in the past, and CEQ is taking the first step to provide a meaningful direction.”

Craig continued, “We don’t raise bald eagles only to use their feathers for our clothes, so why do we spend hundreds of millions of dollars – each year – to recover the salmon species, and then allow a majority of them to be killed through harvesting? The people who pay for these absurd practices are the Northwest ratepayers... Snake River Fall Chinook are the most impacted ESA listed species in the Columbia River system. These fish drive BPA’s fish and wildlife program. Approximately 40 percent to 60 percent of this species is harvested.

“I would like to help the management agencies – the appropriate managers of the river system – to succeed in their efforts to manage the river, in partnership with local, state, and tribal governments.

“Why not trust the experts who have the scientific knowledge to make those decisions and help empower the region to work together instead of giving up and having the court systems make management decisions? How are we to succeed in the future if we keep allowing others to make our decisions for us?

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“I will work with other members of Congress to finally face these challenges and to help provide direction and be more accountable to the public and to recovery of the species. If we are serious about recovery, we need to start acting serious and not avoid the tough questions.

“I would like to challenge my colleagues to come together in a bipartisan way to help the region get back on track.”

**[30]**