

A Coordinated Federal Strategy for the Recovery of the Columbia-Snake River Basin Salmon

Statement by George T. Frampton, Jr.
Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality
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Today, federal government agencies announced a long-term strategy to restore threatened and endangered salmon stocks throughout the Columbia-Snake River Basin. Pacific Northwest salmon can thrive again if local citizens, state officials, tribes, and the federal government continue to work together.

The strategy calls for immediate actions to restore critical habitat, reform hatchery operations, limit harvest, improve river flows, and modify dams and their operations. If it is funded and implemented as written, this strategy will reverse the decline of threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead over the next ten years. To succeed, this strategy requires extensive restoration of estuary and tributary stream habitat and modification of hatcheries, in part to address the hydropower system impacts that will continue. Salmon science indicates that these actions have the best chance of providing solid, predictable improvements needed to ensure the continued existence of threatened and endangered salmon species, including salmon that are affected by the hydropower system. This strategy recognizes that the long-term survival of these species requires effective actions in the next few years. Therefore, it establishes a program to review implementation in 2003, 2005 and 2008, with clear, objectively-measurable biological and physical standards to gauge the success of these actions and tangible consequences for failure, including seeking Congressional approval to breach dams.

Successful implementation of this strategy will require a significant increase in our commitment of resources to the restoration of salmon, while making maximum use of existing funds and authorities. Preliminary estimates of the increased cost of salmon restoration, without breaching dams, indicate that as much as \$175 million to \$190 million may have to be obtained from available funding sources in Fiscal Year 2001, including the retargeting and reprogramming of funds. Funding needs for salmon restoration may as much as double in future fiscal years based on funding decisions made through the annual appropriations process. Costs are stated in the Biological Opinions and the Basin-wide Strategy as estimates meant to help define the scale and pace of the action, not specific amounts these agencies must actually spend to comply. Federal agencies will work with the Office of Management and Budget, Congress, the states, tribes, the Northwest Power Planing Council, and other interested parties to prioritize and accelerate funding and implementation of the measures identified in the biological opinions and the Basin-wide Strategy.

Federal efforts alone are not enough to restore salmon and steelhead. There must be a true and lasting partnership among all those with a stake in the salmon and the region's future. The Clinton-Gore Administration has proven that a healthy environment and a healthy economy can go hand in hand. Working collaboratively, and aggressively, we can restore the salmon of the Pacific Northwest and protect local and regional communities.

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