

DRAFT for Members Review

January XX, 2009

Congressional Delegation and New Administration

The Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA) is an organization whose membership consists of four state and two federal agencies and eleven Indian Tribes with fish and wildlife management responsibilities in the Columbia River Basin (Basin). Our members are legally recognized managers of the fish and wildlife resources through federal and state statutes, treaties, executive order, and court actions. All actions supported by CBFWA are developed through a consensus process. Consensus focuses the agency and tribal actions into a single direction, providing recommendations representing the best available science incorporated into the policy environment of the multiple fish and wildlife co-managers.

Fish and wildlife resources are critically important to Pacific Northwest people (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and northeast Nevada) and there exists a close connection between fish and wildlife conservation and the high quality of life for Pacific Northwest citizens. Further, for the Native American Tribes who have inhabited this region since time immemorial, fish and wildlife resources are culturally and spiritually essential; vital to their identity as peoples; and are protected by treaty and other legal interests.

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The state, Tribal, and federal fish and wildlife managers share the goal of abundant, productive, and diverse communities of fish and wildlife, and a basin that supports the benefits valued by Pacific Northwest people. As such, we take our fish and wildlife conservation responsibilities seriously. To that end, we participate in a variety of new and ongoing conservation initiatives and agreements that provide additional protection for Pacific Northwest fish and wildlife.

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A centerpiece of this work involves our efforts to implement the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act). Through this landmark legislation, Congress sanctioned the Pacific Northwest states to establish the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (Council) and directed the Council to develop a program to protect, mitigate, and enhance Columbia Basin fish and wildlife resources adversely affected by hydroelectric development in the Basin.

The Northwest Power Act established a high degree of deference to the scientific expertise of the fish and wildlife managers. Over the past several years, the region has established the groundwork for significant improvements in fish and wildlife resources in the near future. But the task is not complete. Our commitments must be turned into actions. We now need to focus on implementing actions and demonstrating results. We must adequately monitor and evaluate our actions, and manage our efforts adaptively, to ensure that taxpayer and ratepayer funds are focused on the highest priority tasks.

We recognize that significant amounts of funding and resources will be targeted at protecting, mitigating, and enhancing fish and wildlife resources over the next several years. We are committed to ensuring transparency of decision-making, increased accountability for expenditures, and better coordination among state, federal, and tribal agencies. We stand ready to help the new Administration with these important tasks.

Sincerely,

Elmer Ward, Chairman
Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority

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