

## **Protect and Restore Snake River Salmon and Southern Resident Orcas**

WHEREAS Snake River wild spring/summer chinook salmon have not met the recovery objectives established by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, with smolt-to-adult returns of only 1.1 % since the year 2000 – dramatically short of the 4%-6% target based on experience prior to construction of four dams on the Lower Snake River – despite expenditures of \$16 billion for salmon recovery efforts; and

WHEREAS the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has acknowledged, in its 2017 Snake River Recovery Plan for Spring/Summer Chinook and Steelhead, that its long list of planned salmon recovery actions will not lead to their recovery, but

- (a) the Army Corps of Engineers has concluded that a breaching of the four Lower Snake River dams has the highest probability of meeting federal salmon recovery objectives, and
- (b) results recorded by the National Marine Fisheries Service since 1999 have confirmed that breaching of those dams *by itself* is likely to lead to recovery of fall chinook and steelhead runs; and

WHEREAS chinook salmon comprise at least 80% of the diet of endangered Southern Resident Orcas – more than 50% of it from the Columbia River basin (which includes the Snake River watershed) – and the dwindling of their chinook runs has helped cause the decline of those orcas to a critically low breeding population of fewer than 30 individuals, and

WHEREAS the four lower-Snake dams have a benefit-to-cost ratio of only 15¢ on the dollar, and are further costing society thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in *other* potential benefits of a free-flowing river – including, e.g., an expansion of agricultural land and associated recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS the Pacific Northwest presently has a 16% surplus of energy, with the four lower-Snake dams generating less than 3% of the region’s power production (much of it rarely available to meet peak power demands), and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council has concluded that expected future increases in demand through at least 2030 can be met by energy efficiency and new renewable energy already in the planning stage; and

WHEREAS the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled, on April 20, 2018, that the option of breaching the four lower-Snake dams must be genuinely evaluated and that, in the meantime, the dam operators must increase springtime spill to aid in salmon return; and

WHEREAS the Army Corps of Engineers needs no new authority to place the lower-Snake dams into a “non-operational” status, and already has a fiduciary responsibility to do so; and

WHEREAS breaching the dams can be financed through existing debt reduction and credit mechanisms as a fish mitigation action by the Bonneville Power Administration, making it significantly easier and less costly than originally contemplated; and

WHEREAS both the Southern Resident Orcas and wild Snake River Salmon are an integral part of the Pacific Northwest culture and economy, and after 30 years of failed mitigation efforts further delays will risk the extinction of these treasured and vitally important species;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we call upon the Army Corps of Engineers to begin removal of the earthen portion of the four lower-Snake dams, starting with the Lower Granite and Little Goose Dams by December 2018; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge our federal, state, and local officials to ensure a positive transition for the communities and businesses affected by those removals.

**Adopted August 28, 2018, by the King County Democratic Central Committee**