

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 29, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing today to ask you to convene a "solutions table" to help resolve long-standing issues surrounding the protection and restoration of salmon and steelhead in the Pacific Northwest. This forum would bring together all stakeholders to develop scientifically-sound and fiscally-sustainable salmon recovery options for Congress and the Administration.

The recovery of these salmon populations is critical to the health of the people, communities, and economy of the Pacific Northwest, and the nation as a whole. Historically, up to 30 million wild salmon traversed the path from the Pacific Ocean to the Columbia-Snake River Basin, and have supported thriving Tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries for generations. Today, these once-abundant populations hover at about 1% of their historic numbers. Thirteen stocks are listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), including all four remaining species of Snake River salmon and steelhead. Without these salmon, billions of dollars in economic activity and thousands of jobs would be lost in the region and throughout the country.

In August of this year, a U.S. District Court found the 2008/2010 Biological Opinion (BiOp) illegal – making it the fourth BiOp since 1995 to be invalidated. Two decades of illegal BiOps have done little to help salmon, as many of these populations remain at or below the diminished levels that initially led to their protection under the ESA. These failed BiOps have also done little for Northwest ratepayers and U.S. taxpayers, who have spent more than \$10 billion on Columbia Basin salmon restoration to date.

The court further ordered the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) to produce a new or revised BiOp by 2014 that meets ESA requirements. Scientists tell us that it is not too late to restore our nation's salmon to healthy, self-sustaining levels, but we have limited time to act. The continued decline of these fish and the ever-increasing amount of taxpayer dollars devoted to current efforts makes it imperative that the next BiOp be both scientifically sound and fiscally sustainable.

Many people, businesses, and local leaders who depend on these fish are now eager to move beyond the courtroom to identify durable, cost-effective solutions. These groups support a broad-based, inclusive, and collaborative process where citizens and businesses with a stake in salmon restoration can work alongside Tribes and federal and state agencies to explore all scientifically-sound salmon recovery options and develop a comprehensive set of recommendations to Congress and the Administration.

To that end, we request that in the time granted by the court, you seize this important opportunity to charge NOAA Fisheries with creating a regional stakeholders' "solutions table." This model may be the best path to resolving Columbia-Snake salmon recovery issues in a manner that is science-based, cost-effective, legally sound, and meets the wide-ranging needs of affected communities. More importantly, regional stakeholders would be best equipped to meet the court's charge of exploring "any novel approach" to ensure the restoration of these salmon populations. As we have seen, earlier tiered approaches that excluded stakeholders from crucial discussions have proved unsuccessful. We therefore urge you to bring all parties together to facilitate the development of a successful, legal salmon plan, and in doing so, assure that any new process is fully transparent and considers all affected parties.

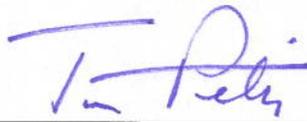
We believe that working alongside one another will allow representatives of diverse interests to craft a blueprint that resolves this long-standing debate in a manner that yields abundant salmon runs, thousands of new jobs, vibrant rural economies, an improved transportation system, new sources of clean and affordable energy, and a reduced burden on taxpayers. Salmon have long supported the economic and cultural vitality of the Northwest and the nation, and we must, in turn, support the continued strength of this precious resource.

We appreciate your engagement on this issue thus far and look forward to working with you and your Administration to reach these shared goals. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



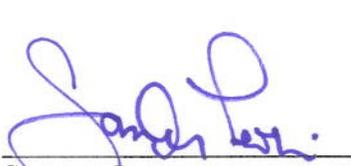
JIM MCDERMOTT
Member of Congress



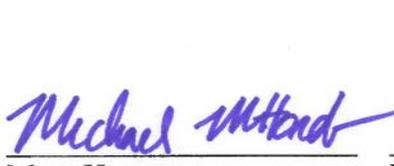
TOM PETRI
Member of Congress



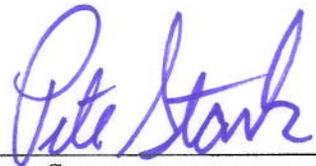
EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



SANDER LEVIN
Member of Congress



MIKE HONDA
Member of Congress



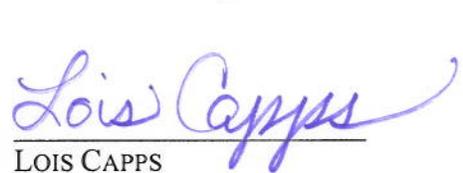
PETE STARK
Member of Congress



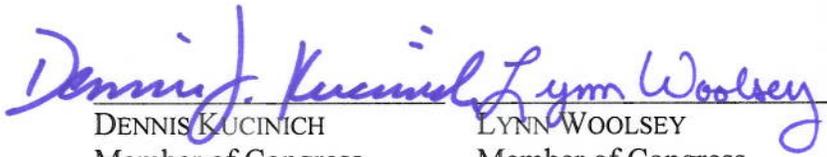
BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



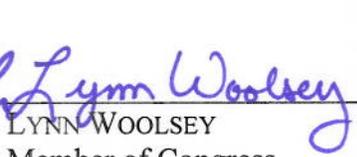
ADAM SCHIFF
Member of Congress



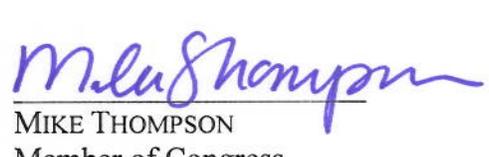
LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress



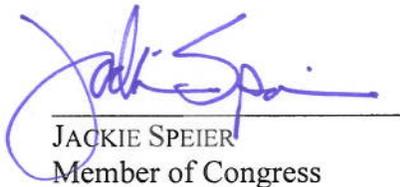
DENNIS KUCINICH
Member of Congress



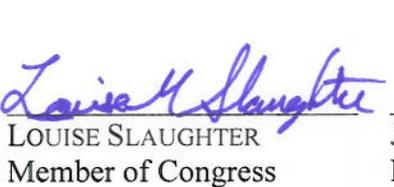
LYNN WOOLSEY
Member of Congress



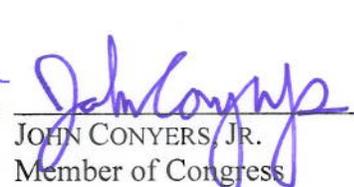
MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress



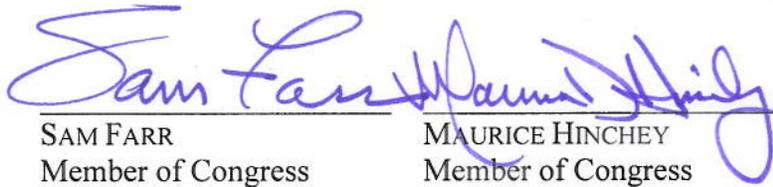
JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress



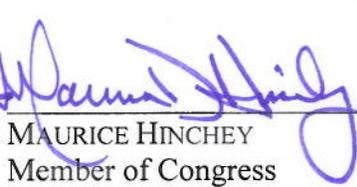
LOUISE SLAUGHTER
Member of Congress



JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Member of Congress



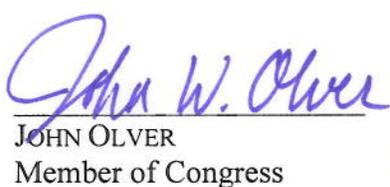
SAM FARR
Member of Congress



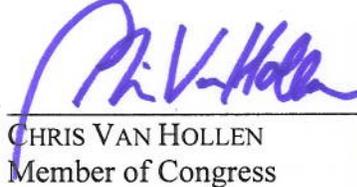
MAURICE HINCHEY
Member of Congress



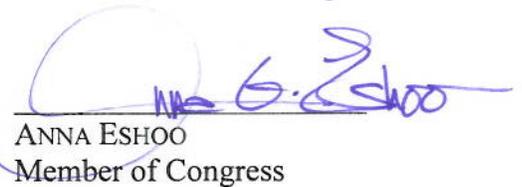
RAUL GRIJALVA
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JOHN OLVER
Member of Congress



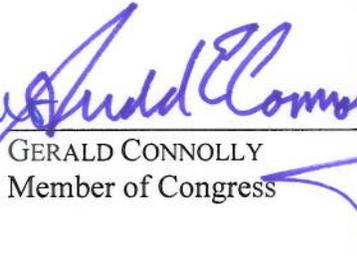
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
Member of Congress



ANNA ESHOO
Member of Congress



GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress

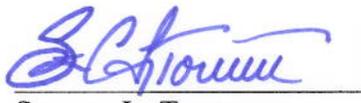


GERALD CONNOLLY
Member of Congress



TIMOTHY JOHNSON
Member of Congress

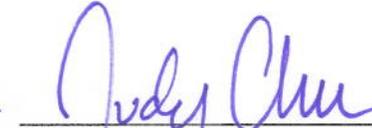

BOB FILNER
Member of Congress

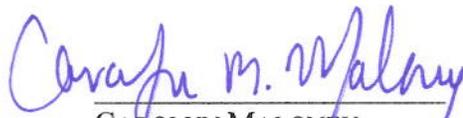

STEVEN LATOURETTE
Member of Congress

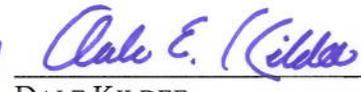

ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress

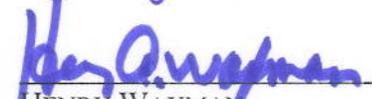

DAVID PRICE
Member of Congress


EDWARD MARKEY
Member of Congress

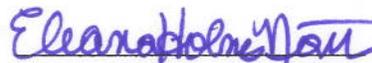

JUDY CHU
Member of Congress


CAROLYN MALONEY
Member of Congress

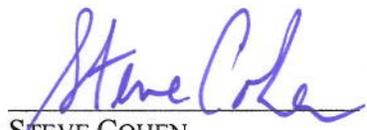

DALE KILDEE
Member of Congress


HENRY WAXMAN
Member of Congress

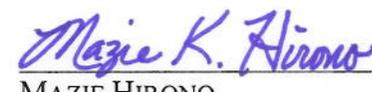

PAUL TONKO
Member of Congress


ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress

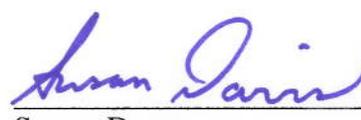

HOWARD BERMAN
Member of Congress

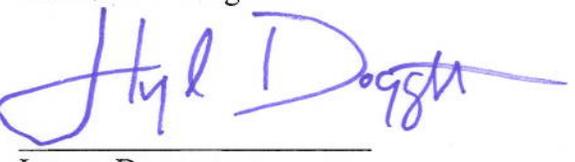

STEVE COHEN
Member of Congress

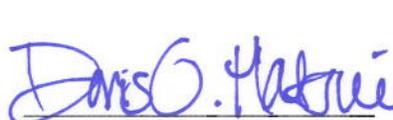

BETTY MCCOLLUM
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MAZIE HIRONO
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RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress

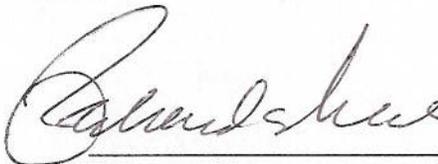

SUSAN DAVIS
Member of Congress

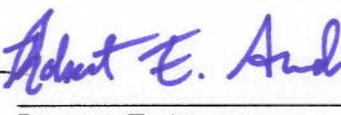

LLOYD DOGGETT
Member of Congress

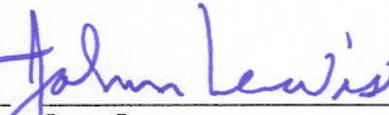

DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress


JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress

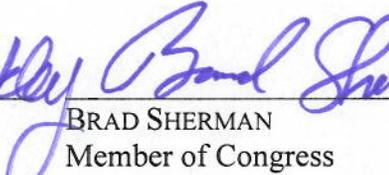

CORRINE BROWN
Member of Congress

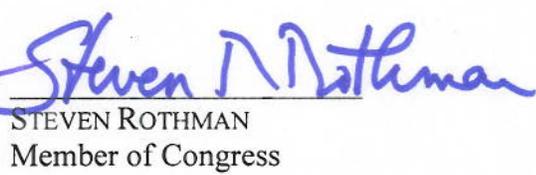

RICHARD NEAL
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ROBERT E. ANDREWS
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SHELLEY BERKLEY
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BRAD SHERMAN
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