



June 22, 2018

TO: Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Northwest Congressional Delegation

RE: Support for H.R. 2083 and S. 1702 – To reduce marine mammal predation on endangered Columbia River salmon

We come together today to lend our strong and joint support for H.R. 2083 and S. 1702, bills that would reduce predation of endangered adult salmon and steelhead. The Public Power Council (PPC) is a not for profit association that represents about 100 consumer-owned electric utilities in the Pacific Northwest on issues regarding the Federal Columbia River Power System. The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) provides coordination and technical assistance to the tribes in regional, national, and international efforts to ensure that treaty fishing rights issues are protected in a way that guarantees the continuation and restoration of tribal fisheries into perpetuity.

In the last few decades, west coast sea lion populations have increased ten-fold. This growing population has expanded its search for food and found it in the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, river systems they had never before accessed. A recent NOAA Fisheries study estimates that pinnipeds consumed between 10-45 percent of some stocks of returning adult salmon in 2017. It is difficult to envision a successful recovery plan for fish listed under the Endangered Species Act without addressing this aggressive predation on the very adult fish that have benefitted from current efforts only to fall short in surviving a return to their spawning grounds.

H.R. 2083 and S. 1702, introduced in the first session of the 115th Congress, address this concern by building on existing authorities that allow some lethal take of sea lions near Bonneville Dam by appropriate tribal and state entities. Fisheries biologists estimate predation would greatly decrease by incorporating all management activity in the areas of high predation between the mouth of the river up to the dam.

These bills are widely supported in the Northwest. In addition to this joint support from CRITFC and PPC, regional governors from both parties, along with other industries who rely on healthy salmon and steelhead runs, have come together to back these bills. We are hopeful the proposals will receive broad bipartisan support in the House of Representatives and Senate.

This situation continues to expand supporters of this legislation among diverse interests in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Our joint support represents that healthy salmon and steelhead runs are critical to the future of the Columbia River treaty tribes and utilities. This bill would give fisheries managers greater tools to appropriately reduce predation of these endangered fish. Again, we support H.R. 2083 and S. 1702 and urge their expeditious passage through Congress.

Sincerely,



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