October 11, 2017

The Honorable Chairman Rob Bishop
The Honorable Ranking Member Raul Grijalva
Subcommittee on Water, Power and Energy
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Greetings Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comment for the record regarding HR 3144 as part of the hearing before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee for Water, Power and Oceans.

Save Our wild Salmon (SOS) and its members are driven by a commitment to restore abundant, self-sustaining salmon and steelhead populations that will support historic and critical ecological roles (e.g., delivering nutrients to Columbia/Snake rivers and their tributaries, providing substantial nutritional benefits to endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales and scores of other fish and wildlife species, etc.), as well as critical cultural and economic roles (supporting robust harvest by tribal, commercial and recreational fishing communities in the Northwest and along the West Coast from California to Alaska, supporting thousands of jobs in these sectors, dependably providing for the essential cultural needs of our tribal neighbors, etc.), and doing so in a manner that best meets the life cycle needs of wild salmon and steelhead, with minimal human intervention needed over time, and based on the best available scientific information.

We have two objectives with this letter: to explain the reasons for our strong opposition to this bill and to share with you a series of documents, links and other materials that we hope will help inform your deliberations.

First, we want to express our strong opposition to HR 3144 and to urge members of this Subcommittee to also oppose this harmful legislation. Wild salmon and steelhead are iconic and irreplaceable natural renewable resource in the Pacific Northwest. The benefits they deliver are too numerous to list completely. They are central to the culture, economy, and health of many Native American Tribes in our region. They also support thousands of businesses and jobs in scores of communities in Washington State, Idaho and Oregon, and on the coast from California to Alaska. They have support and benefit more than
one hundred other fish and wildlife species, including the critically endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales. The Columbia Snake River Basin was once the most productive wild salmon and steelhead landscape on the planet, but today just remnant populations return from the ocean every year to spawn and complete their life cycle.

The people of the Pacific Northwest have worked for decades to better manage the Columbia Basin federal hydro-system – the single largest human cause of mortality for the basin’s salmon populations – to increase survival and begin to rebuild the thirteen populations that have been listed under the Endangered Species Act over the last twenty five years. Unfortunately, this effort to date has fallen far short of its goals. During the past two decades, five consecutive Columbia Basin Federal Salmon Plans have been rejected by three different U.S. District Court judges – mostly recently in May 2016. During this same time, Northwest energy consumers and American taxpayers have spent in excess of $10 billion, yet have failed to restore a single imperiled population.

By any metric, a dramatically new approach is needed. Save Our wild salmon is committed to protecting and restoring abundant, harvestable populations of wild salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake Rivers and their tributaries. And SOS is equally committed to working with the region’s sovereigns, stakeholders and other interests to do this in a manner that is lawful, science-based and meets the needs of affected communities: fishermen and farmers, shippers and energy consumers, and others.

If it becomes law, HR 3144 will lock in this failed approach of the past and make effective, durable solutions much harder to achieve. It will harm salmon, continue to spend huge sums of public money on many programs that are insufficient, ineffective and/or counter-productive.

If passed into law, HR 3144 will:
- Weaken the Endangered Species Act and harm imperiled salmon populations by overturning the May 2016 U.S. District Court decision that rejected the federal agencies most recent salmon plan as inadequate and illegal.
- Weaken the Endangered Species Act and harm imperiled salmon populations by overturning the April 2017 U.S. District Court order to increase spill in the spring months over the tops of the federal dams on the lower Columbia and lower Snake Rivers in order to increase survival of out-migrating juvenile salmon and steelhead until a comprehensive legally and scientifically valid plan is in place.
- Weaken the National Environmental Policy Act by derailing a court order to undertake a full and fair NEPA Review of the operations of the federal hydro-system and various alternatives available to finally protect and restore these endangered populations. In order to craft a lawful, effective plan, our region needs to understand the costs and benefits and tradeoffs associated with all reasonable recovery alternatives, including increased spill in spring and summer, and the removal of the four federal dams on the lower Snake River, among others.

HR 3144 would inflict great harm on already struggling populations of wild salmon and steelhead in the Snake and Columbia Rivers. As a result, it will also inflict great harm on those human communities and other fish and wildlife populations that depend upon healthy salmon stocks and their many benefits. The harmful, divisive provisions of HR
3144 will also make inclusive, constructive regional problem-solving and collaboration this conflict demands far more difficult to achieve. This is likely to lead to further litigation, mis-spent dollars, uncertainty, salmon declines and extinctions, job losses and other destructive impacts to communities.

The Save Our wild Salmon Coalition opposes HR 3144 and urges this subcommittee and its members to do so as well.

We have attached to this letter a series of documents with further information that support our position and we believe will also be very helpful to help bring you to a similar conclusion.

We thank you for this opportunity to submit our comments as part of the hearing and appreciate your careful consideration. If we can be of any assistance, please contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

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**Attachments and Links:**

Save Our wild Salmon Coalition NEPA Review Public Scoping Comments

Conservation and Fishing Sign-On Letter to Northwest Policymakers Opposing HR 3144

Scientists Sign-On Letter to Northwest Policymakers in Support of Increased Spill

Editorial: Lewiston Morning Tribune: Who is McMorris Rodgers looking after?

Editorial: Lewiston Morning Tribune: If fish recovery is working, where are the fish?

Editorial: Register-Guard: A damming proposal – Congressional bill is not a good option

Guest Opinion: Spokesman Review: Bill would rubber stamp salmon failure

**Seattle Times**: Warm-water conditions in the Columbia and Snake Rivers are challenging cold water salmon and steelhead — and the problem is likely to get worse because of climate change. (Aug. 2017)
Seattle Times: Empty nets signal trouble for Columbia River salmon (Oct. 2017)

Idaho Statesman: 5 things we’ve learned about the Pacific Northwest’s endangered salmon (Oct. 2017)

Idaho Statesman: Fate of Pacific Northwest orcas tied to having enough Columbia River salmon (May 2017)
The connection between saving salmon in the Columbia and Snake rivers and preserving killer whales in Washington state and British Columbia is bringing together advocates of both imperiled species, who want to see four Snake River dams in Washington removed.