February 7, 2017

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division
Attn: CRSO EIS, P.O. Box 2870
Portland, OR  97208

Dear Administrator Mainzer, Commander Spellmon and Director Lee:

National Wildlife Federation members in the Northwest and around the country have been concerned for decades about the Columbia Basin’s decimated runs of salmon and steelhead. Throughout these many years, your agencies have professed an equal level of concern but have not taken the steps needed to halt and reverse the extinction curve that many fish runs are on.

The federal courts have once again ordered your agencies to evaluate the steps needed to recover salmon and steelhead runs, and once these steps have been identified, to take the actions needed to bring back wild salmon and steelhead.

An absolutely critical step in this process is for your agencies to develop an alternative that would remove the four dams on the lower Snake River. These dams have virtually destroyed the wild salmon and steelhead runs into the great spawning streams and rivers of Idaho and dam removal is essential if runs into these vast habitats are to be restored to their former abundance. Absent such restoration, the recovery goals of the Endangered Species Act will never be met.

NWF further believes that a truly complete restoration alternative will also identify the steps needed to mitigate impacts to those who have made economic investments based on the Columbia hydro-system as it exists today. These investors include barge operators, irrigated agricultural, shippers and electric consumers. We further believe that the analysis must also account for the market and non-market costs and benefits of dam removal. Such benefits include not only salmon recovery but the recovery of species that depend on salmon including endangered killer whales.

Since 1993, your agencies have repeatedly written plans that were inadequate to job of restoring salmon and steelhead to the Columbia. Attached are files containing the names of 22,057 Americans who call on the federal agencies to develop a new plan that finally does the job of bringing back wild salmon and steelhead runs. The time is now for effective action. Thank you for accepting these comments.

Thomas France
National Wildlife Federation Action Fund