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"Working with public and private landowners to enhance the region's salmon populations since 1991"

Dr. Tom Karier, Chair, and Members
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, OR 97204 -1348

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May 8, 2007

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Dear Dr. Karier:

Sea lion predation on salmon, steelhead and sturgeon is a serious threat to fisheries in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in the Columbia River, where fishery managers are trying to recover endangered populations.

The Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group is a non-regulatory, non-profit recovery organization that works in watersheds throughout Clark, Skamania, Lewis, Wahkiakum, and Cowlitz counties to provide leadership in salmon recovery in ways that promote partnerships, collaboration and community involvement. Our members and partners also work to restore habitats that sustain salmon and steelhead runs in the Lower Columbia Basin. We support the development and use of sound resource management and best science to promote healthy aquatic ecosystems and abundant fishery resources.

The marine mammal situation has risen to such prominence in the Pacific Northwest that managers from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho have recently sought permission to institute a lethal take program, to cull problematic marine mammals in areas where salmon and steelhead congregate in the Columbia River. An additional approach (recently evaluated in British Columbia, Canada) is under development by Smith-Root, Inc., a private company in Vancouver, WA. It involves the testing of innovative technology (a non-lethal electric barrier coupled with a sonar detection system) to deter marine mammal predation on fish. Smith-Root pioneered the development of electrofishing equipment and has manufactured this technology for a wide array of fishery biologists, researchers and managers over the past 43 years.

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The Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group encourages innovations in scientific thinking that can assist managers in solving difficult resource issues — using whatever strategies the managers deem essential to restoration and recovery plans for Columbia Basin fishery resources. The Northwest Power and Conservation Council should provide demonstration opportunities for the testing and evaluation of innovative science that may help managers resolve complex natural resource issues and sustain regional fisheries resources. Multiple approaches are often necessary to address challenging issues. The novel concept and demonstration project proposed by Smith-Root may represent yet another viable technique with which to address the marine mammal predation issues in the Columbia River Basin.

Sincerely,

Tony Meyer
Executive Director

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