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### **Statement**

**Terry Flores, Executive Director, Northwest RiverPartners**

We are deeply disappointed in Judge Redden's latest reaction to the Federal Biological Opinion on Columbia and Snake River hydro operations, especially since he noted in court that the BiOp was 'very close' in March.

For the first time in two decades the region has more consensus on salmon recovery because Northwest states and federal agencies and tribes developed this biological opinion collaboratively. This biological opinion uses the best available science and proposes spending some \$10 billion over the next decade to recover listed salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

This BiOp enjoys the broadest support and largest investment ever seen in the Northwest in salmon recovery. It is unprecedented legally and in the use of best science. This development could fracture the region and set it back decades.

Not only is this plan at risk. Other opinions, which rely on the mitigation provided by the hydro system, are at risk, including allowing the continued harvest of listed salmon and steelhead. If this BiOp is found wanting, other key agreements could come unraveled.

Moving forward with implementation of the salmon plan and the state and tribal accords that provide hundreds of millions of dollars in habitat and hatchery improvements could create a lasting legacy of collaboration and actions to help these iconic fish. Keeping the plan in the courtroom only fosters continued divisiveness and keeps attorneys busy.

This plan builds on the \$10 billion already spent in the past 20 years that has helped contribute to some of the largest salmon and steelhead runs seen in decades. In these difficult economic times, Northwest families and businesses are already paying about 20% of their electric bills to foster salmon recovery; this latest plan adds to that.

The plaintiffs admitted motivation in bringing this litigation in the first place is to achieve removal of the four lower Snake River dams. This is nonsensical especially at a time of critical concern over climate change. Removing four lower Snake River dams would add 5.4 million tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere annually – not counting the emissions from thousands of trucks that would be required to move agricultural and other products now shipped by barge down the rivers.

Fortunately, congressional and other Northwest leaders recognize the value of the hydro system as a clean, renewable source of energy and the region's economic engine. These dams provide all the electricity required by the city of Seattle and the essential backup power for new and developing wind energy in the region.

*Northwest River Partners is an alliance of farmers, utilities, ports and businesses that promote the economic and environmental benefits of the Columbia and Snake Rivers and salmon recovery policies based on sound science.*