



Questions and Answers

Does this plan recommend breach and, if not, why not?

No, the plan doesn't recommend breaching dams. Much of the regional debate has focused on removal of Snake River dams. The National Marine Fisheries Service is not recommending it at this time, however, for several reasons. There is scientific uncertainty about whether breaching dams is necessary to achieve recovery and whether breaching alone can lead to recovery. Only Snake River fish would benefit from breaching, with minimal benefit to the other eight listed populations in the Columbia Basin. Dam removal is not within the existing authority of the federal agencies. It would take many years to implement. Its high cost could preclude other actions needed throughout the basin. In short, the option of breaching the Snake River dams ranks as a lower priority than other options because of narrow benefits, high uncertainties and high costs.

What does the science say?

The science says there are many stocks in the Columbia and Snake basins at real risk of extinction and we must act now to save them. The science further says that there is no silver bullet for salmon recovery: changes must be comprehensive to be successful. The science suggests that we place priorities on those improvements that will afford the greatest benefits and points to improvements in the tributaries and in the estuary as holding real promise.

What is the 3, 5, and 8-year check-in?

The National Marine Fisheries Service will issue a report at each of these check-in years on whether activities are on track in habitat restoration, hydrosystem improvements, and harvest and hatcheries management for salmon recovery. This analysis will include scientific peer review at five and eight years.

The *three-year review* will assess whether agencies have taken steps to achieve the goals for salmon and steelhead populations. Key activities are those that:

- result in near-term survival benefits for the listed stocks,
- prepare for implementation of additional survival improvement measures, and
- set planning, research and monitoring actions that are important for implementation and the evaluation of progress by 2005 and 2008.

The fisheries service will determine whether implementation is substantially meeting expectations, significantly falling short of expectations, or failing. If the fisheries service issues a failure report, it will identify corrective actions, including actions not currently authorized for implementation, to avoid jeopardizing the listed species and adversely modifying their critical habitat. For example, failure to implement sufficient estuary or tributary habitat improvements for Snake River salmon and steelhead would require that the agencies seek authorizations to



breach Snake River dams (while continuing efforts to restore estuary and tributary habitat) to ensure that all options are available in 2005.

At the *five- and eight-year reviews*, the fisheries service will reevaluate the performance of the listed species based on performance standards, new monitoring data, results of research on critical uncertainties, and initial results from pilot studies. It will verify (1) that population growth rates are improving compared to current levels, (2) that the improvement is at predicted levels, and (3) that the improving trend will meet levels needed for recovery. A fourth standard establishes a “floor” of population levels to avoid loss of genetic diversity needed for long-term survival and recovery.

How does this plan complement each Northwest Governors’ Salmon Plan?

The Federal Caucus met with each governor’s staff to discuss actions for fish recovery. Many of the actions called for in the All-H paper came from those discussions. The Caucus will continue to coordinate with the state, tribes and others to work out the specifics on implementation. In general there is a high degree of consistency between the Federal Caucus’s approach and the four governors’ recommendations.

How much will this plan cost the taxpayers? How much will it cost the region’s ratepayers?

This plan is a major restoration effort. Every effort will be made to use existing funds where they are available. However, implementation of actions we have identified will likely result in additional costs to both taxpayers and ratepayers. We estimate the annual cost of the entire Federal Program to be approximately \$500 million. This represents an increase over current spending of \$100-\$200 million per year.

Ratepayer Costs:

Current available for direct costs:	\$252 million
Additional costs for new BiOp	\$100 million
Additional costs for operations availability, etc.)	(Varies depending on market costs, water
Total BPA:	\$352 million

Appropriations:

Depends on proposed improvement actions for hatcheries and estuaries. As well as whether or not existing funds can be re-prioritized.

Preliminary estimates	\$175-190 million
Whole program total:	Approximately \$500 million



What happens to resident fish under this plan?

The National Marine Fisheries Service biological opinion addresses the effects of hydropower operations on listed salmon. The Fish and Wildlife Service has developed a separate biological opinion that addresses bull trout, a threatened resident fish species, and Kootenai River white sturgeon, listed as an endangered resident fish species. Both agencies have addressed issues where conflict might arise, and collaborated on solutions to meet both the needs of the listed salmon and steelhead, and the bull trout and sturgeon. Specifically, the two agencies have agreed on operations at Hungry Horse and Libby dams that will benefit all species, and implementation of modified flood control operations at both dams to store additional water for resident fish and salmon.

The Fish and Wildlife Service opinion also addresses the operation of Albeni Falls Dam and its effect on lake elevations important for Kokanee spawning in Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho. Kokanee are an important food base for the listed bull trout.

Record runs of some salmon returned this last year. Does this plan consider this fact?

The good returns this year are welcome news. However, the success or failure of this plan will be based on the long-term productivity of salmon runs in response to the strategy. The Caucus will look for **sustainable** changes in productivity. One good year here or there does not make a trend. While recent returns may be the beginning of a trend based on actions taken since 1995, it's also possible they are simply a reaction to temporary improvements in ocean conditions. It will take several years of data collection and monitoring to detect a trend.

Will there be a problem meeting winter power demand?

In low water years there could be a problem in meeting power needs. We are currently in exactly that situation. The Biological Opinion allows for operations to meet emergency energy shortfall situations. Depending on the magnitude and duration of an energy shortfall, it could become necessary to declare a power emergency and modify system operations. In that event, BPA, the operating agencies, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service will evaluate the situation and modify operations. That evaluation would include impacts to listed fish and consideration of mitigative actions.

How much energy will the Federal Power System lose as a result of this BiOp?

Federal generation will be reduced by an incremental 59 average megawatts (aMW), compared to 1998 Biological Opinion operations, under average conditions. Compared to a base case operation that puts priority on power and flood control, the cumulative impact of operating to the 2000 Biological Opinion requirements is 982 aMW.