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From: Rhett Lawrence [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Wednesday, December 11, 2002 11:46 AM
To: comments@nwppc.org
Subject: OSPIRG Comments on Draft Mainstem Amendments

Please find pasted in below and attached as a Word document OSPIRG's comments on the Draft Mainstem Amendments. Please let me know if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing of your decision in this matter.

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TO: Members of the Northwest Power Planning Council
FROM: Rhett Lawrence, OSPIRG
DATE: December 10, 2002
RE: Draft Mainstem Amendments to Columbia and Snake River Plans

Good evening, my name is Rhett Lawrence and I am the Environmental Advocate on Clean Water and Toxics issues for OSPIRG, the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest advocacy group with more than 33,000 members across Oregon. I am here today to voice OSPIRG's concerns with the Northwest Power Planning Council's Draft Mainstem Amendments. It is our belief that this effort will set back salmon recovery efforts in the Columbia River Basin.

Quite simply, any plan which would reduce water flow in the basin is misguided. It goes without saying – or it should – that fish need water, and lots of it. Maintaining a strong flow of water is critical to help regulate water temperature in the basin and thereby prevent the high temperatures that can be so damaging to fish. In addition, a strong flow helps to guide young fish downstream by increasing river speed. The importance of an adequate flow in the river simply cannot be denied, and trucking or barging fish around dams is clearly not the answer.

We also believe that this proposal once again places a higher priority on dams than on fish. As is often the case, measures to protect and restore wild salmon in the basin will go out the window so that more hydroelectric power can be generated. At some point, we must realize that we cannot simply continue business as usual and expect the natural world to just deal with it. We must begin focusing on conservation and energy efficiency, in addition to developing alternative and renewable energy sources. There are plenty of feasible options available which can help to reduce the pressure on the Columbia and Snake Rivers to generate electricity.

Finally, I would suggest that the failure of the Draft Mainstem Amendments to fulfill the NPPC's directive to balance the needs of salmon and energy is indicative of a larger question: namely, is this body doing its job if, in one instance after another, the decisions always come down on the side of more power, instead of more salmon? OSPIRG believes that the Council's charge is to make a more balanced inquiry than that, and to make sure that both sides of the equation come out even. Your decision in this matter could be a critical step in showing that this body is up to the task assigned to it by Congress. The salmon need the water and it's about time we took their needs into account. I therefore ask you to resist any efforts to reduce flow in the Columbia Basin. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.