

OREGON WHEAT GROWERS LEAGUE  
RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE  
MAINSTEM PLAN

COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN  
FISH AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM

Submitted on Behalf of  
Environment & Regulations Committee  
A sub-committee of the  
Oregon Wheat Growers League

December 3, 2002

**OREGON WHEAT GROWERS LEAGUE RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON THE MAINSTEM PLAN  
COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN FISH AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM**

The following recommendations are submitted on behalf of the Environment and Regulations Committee, a sub-committee of the Oregon Wheat Growers League (hereinafter "League"). The Environment and Regulations Committee is one of five sub-committees of the League. The League is a member association directly representing nearly 2,000 members and indirectly representing an additional 3,500 wheat producers and landlords throughout the State of Oregon. The League was formed in 1926 by a small group of wheat producers who acknowledged the necessity of joining together to discuss issues of mutual concern and carrying those concerns to State and Federal policy makers for their awareness, education and action. The League continues its efforts to educate policymakers on matters of importance to the agricultural industry. Oregon's irrigated agriculture spans 1.6 million acres which is equal to 44% of Oregon's total cropland. Approximately 200,000 acres of cropland are serviced directly from the Columbia River. The annual household income derived from agriculture in Oregon is approximately \$4 Billion. The decisions made by the federal agencies, the NWPPC, and tribes do have an impact on Oregon's agricultural industry and its ability to access the river for transportation of commodities to the downriver port facilities. It is for these reasons that it is incumbent upon the League to actively participate in the dialogue as final policies concerning the river and salmon restoration are being developed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The League supports the amendment of the Northwest Power Planning Council's Columbia River Fish and Wildlife Program ("Program") to adopt a mainstem plan and sees this as an opportunity to make substantial improvements to the 1995 Program. The

revisions should reflect new scientific information as well as the physical, economic, legal, and political realities in the region. This document sets forth the League's recommendations with respect to the proposed components of the mainstem portion of the Program.

The League supports salmon recovery. However, the League has become increasingly concerned by the lack of response to legitimate scientific concerns raised by this and other organizations. Federal Agencies and tribes continue to demand release of water from the Columbia and Snake Rivers for flow augmentation in the name of salmon recovery, yet the purported benefit of flow augmentation has never been documented. In fact, some spill activity has been deemed, "non-beneficial."

The League further supports the retro-fitting of dams for fish passage and efficiency. This proposed solution was met with little or no regard by the agencies and tribes when released a few years ago. Research on improved transportation should be a focus of the final plan. The OWGL supports off-stream water storage and encourages the creation of reservoirs for fish habitat.

The mainstem plan must be consistent with the Northwest Power Act. The duty of the Council is to "protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife" affected by the hydrosystem, "while assuring the Pacific Northwest an adequate, efficient, economical and reliable power supply." The Council has a duty and a unique opportunity to bring reason and balance to the mainstem debate. In addition to optimizing power production, the Council should develop and refine tools for evaluating the cost-effectiveness of fish and wildlife management measures.

In the mainstem plan, juvenile passage measures should be based on actions that are the most biologically effective and cost-effective, not on a strategy to provide

conditions that most closely approximate natural conditions. Where it is deemed necessary for landowners to augment riparian areas to create habitat, those landowners/tenants should be compensated for their time and reimbursed for any and all costs of these efforts. Habitat restoration should not be mandated through regulatory enforcement, but instead be a voluntary program with financial incentives available.

As the Council continues to pursue adequate, effective, economical and reliable power systems, the League would strongly recommend that the Council consider a study of the overall and cumulative impacts to the airshed of all new power generating facilities. The quality of air in the Northwest has for generations been held to a high standard. A perceived need for additional power generating facilities should not serve as sufficient basis for allowing the airshed of Oregon to be compromised and the consequences born by existing industries, specifically agriculture.

The League supports the Council's efforts to improve spawning, rearing and resting habitat for all fish in the river system, from ocean-going salmon and steelhead in the lower river to resident species like bull trout and white sturgeon that inhabit rivers and reservoirs in the headwaters areas, but urges the Council to weigh the needs of all involved parties equally. The needs of the salmon recovery industry should not take precedence over the needs of the agricultural or other economically beneficial industries in the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute our remarks tonight. If the League can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact Tammy Dennee, the Executive Director of the Oregon Wheat Growers League.