



April 10, 2018

The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

RE: Trout Unlimited opposes H.R. 3144, a bill related to operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System.

Dear Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the Committee:

As the President and CEO of Trout Unlimited and as chairmen of Trout Unlimited's state councils in the four Columbia Basin states, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, we write to express our organization's opposition to HR 3144. Trout Unlimited is the nation's largest coldwater fisheries conservation organization, with more than 300,000 supporters, including 15,000 members in the Columbia Basin states. Trout Unlimited favors the development of cooperative, durable solutions to the fisheries and other resource challenges of the Columbia Basin, and we strongly urge bill sponsors and committee leadership to work to that end.

HR 3144 would preclude -- for a period of more than five years -- implementation of any salmon and steelhead recovery measures in the Columbia and Snake rivers not contained in the Supplemental Biological Opinion issued by NOAA Fisheries on January 17, 2014, which was rejected by a federal court because it was deeply flawed.

The Columbia Basin's salmon and steelhead, and the businesses and communities that depend on them, need help now. Despite the passage of almost three decades and the expenditure of billions of dollars since Snake River sockeye salmon were protected under the Endangered Species Act, there has been little progress toward recovery of sockeye or any of the other salmon and steelhead species that have been protected under the ESA since the 1990s. For example, in 2017, the numbers of wild steelhead returning to the Columbia Basin were among the *lowest on record*. Consequently, fishing opportunity is being greatly reduced and anglers and fishing-dependent businesses are being hurt.

In light of this dire situation, it is inappropriate to prohibit the use of new recovery measures that could significantly boost wild salmon and steelhead in the near-term, but that is precisely what HR 3144 would do. For example, the bill would override the district court's order, which was recently affirmed on appeal, to increase the amount of water spilled over the dams starting in 2018, a proven method for substantially increasing fish survival. The Columbia Basin's wild salmon and steelhead can't afford the

failed status quo for another five years, which would put at grave risk not only the fish and the people who depend on them, but also would undermine the nation's huge investments in salmon recovery to date.

We need to shift our attention to identifying and implementing actions that truly have potential to make the major gains necessary to rebuild wild salmon and steelhead, and to do so in a manner that provides the greatest benefits to the people of the Northwest. Since 2009, Trout Unlimited has been calling for a "solutions table," supported and enabled by the region's political leaders, where stakeholders can identify such actions that work for both people and fish. Several leaders from both sides of the political aisle, including Republican Senators Jim Risch and Mike Crapo of Idaho, and former Democratic Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, have called for such a forum.

Accordingly, we urge the House Natural Resources Committee to reject HR 3144 and ask the sponsors to focus their efforts toward the creation of a collaborative forum that can resolve this long-running, costly battle. The Columbia Basin's irreplaceable wild salmon and steelhead, the communities and businesses that depend on them, and the nation's enormous investment in their recovery are all at stake.

Sincerely,



Chris Wood
President & CEO
Trout Unlimited



Chris Schustrom
Whitefish, Montana
Montana State Council Chair
Trout Unlimited



Brad Throssell
North Bend, Washington
Washington State Council Chair
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