



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Obama repackages old salmon plan, ignores science and offers more of the same

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BOISE — The Obama administration today released a revised recovery document on Columbia and Snake river salmon and steelhead. Called the 2010 Supplemental BiOp, this update to the failed 2008 Bush-era Biological Opinion continues to ignore the best available science and proposes studies rather than actions to address a 20-years-and-counting crisis.

“What they’ve done here is release the old Bush plan with a new cover page,” said Idaho Rivers United Executive Director Bill Sedivy. “Clearly the Obama team thought salmon-dependent communities would be so dazzled by a shiny new wrapper that we wouldn’t notice the lack of substance and change.”

In February, federal District Court Judge James Redden accepted the government’s request for a 90-day remand during which it could address the judge’s very specific concerns with the 2008 BiOp and an Obama administration addendum called the Adaptive Management Implementation Plan.

“This was the Obama team’s chance to quit being evasive and do something to protect salmon in the Columbia-Snake River Basin,” Sedivy said. “It was their chance to follow, not avoid, the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. This was the administration’s opportunity to show how we can protect our rivers and watersheds from the effects of climate change. The administration could have brought people together to create a long-lasting solution for wild salmon rather than drive a wedge among them. This is a failure of massive proportions, not just for the administration but for the people of Idaho and the citizens of the Pacific Northwest.”

In legal proceedings, and particularly in writing, Judge Redden has been very clear about the federal plan’s shortcomings. On Feb. 10, 2010, he wrote to attorneys in the federal case: “Federal Defendants have an obligation under the Endangered Species Act (‘ESA’) to rely on the best available science. They cannot rely exclusively on materials that support one position, while ignoring new or opposing scientific information.”

The administration, unfortunately, continues to propose plans to continue planning and studies to initiate studies on a serious endangered species issue that’s been ongoing for 20 years. Real solutions to creating a scientifically-sound plan are clear. The plan must take seriously the removal of four dams on the lower Snake River; it must commit to spilling water over the dams to help out-migrating salmon; it must establish specific actions to combat the effects of climate change on salmon; it must apply the Endangered Species Act’s jeopardy standard for protecting imperiled species; and it must set a stakeholder table that will lead to substantive discussions on how all parties involved can be kept whole while recovering Idaho’s wild endangered salmon and steelhead.

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“Sadly, this is just the latest in a long succession of missed opportunities,” Sedivy said. “These salmon are unique on a global scale and deserve our government’s immediate best efforts. This repackaged plan is a direct threat to our way of life in Idaho. It ignores the importance of salmon to our economy, fishing communities, healthy watersheds, healthy food source and our cultural and religious heritage. The people of Idaho deserve better.”

Sedivy said IRU and others are still anxiously anticipating more involvement from Idaho’s Congressional delegation. Last May, Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, expressed interest in supporting or leading a collaborative effort to bring stakeholders together to work on salmon recovery, with dam removal on the table. Similarly, Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, has said he will work to bridge differences and seek common solutions.

“We’re still looking to our political leaders to step up and lead on this issue,” Sedivy said, “and we’re looking forward to regional discussions that will help put an end to this longstanding crisis. Now is the time to get these talks started.”