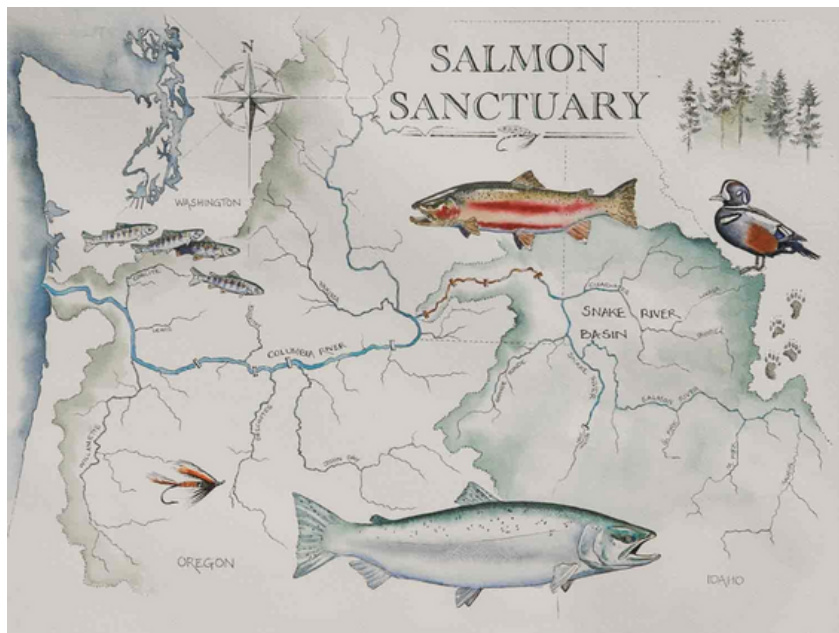


RESTORING THE SALMON RUNS OF THE SNAKE RIVER BASIN



Snake River salmon populations are currently hovering on the brink of extinction. The science is clear and compelling, supported by decades of rigorously peer-reviewed published reports and manuscripts: removing the four lower Snake River dams is essential to avoiding extinction and rebuilding populations to healthy and abundant levels. There is no credible scientific dissent. Inaction will lead to extinction.

In the Pacific Northwest, the Columbia River basin dominates the landscape stretching across 250,000 square miles and seven states. The Snake River, the main tributary of the Columbia River, was once free flowing and teeming with salmon and steelhead with more than two million fish returning annually. Between 1961 and 1975, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed four dams on the lower Snake that dramatically reduced survival of migrating salmon and transformed the once free-flowing river into a series of warm, slow moving reservoirs. Today, only 1-2% of the historical numbers of wild fish return to the Snake River. Despite billions spent on habitat improvement and fish passage, extinction is looming for the once abundant anadromous fish. Snake steelhead, Snake fall Chinook, Snake spring/summer Chinook are listed as threatened, Wild Snake sockeye are endangered, and Snake coho are already extinct.

ESA: FOCUS ON EXTINCTION RISK

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) serves an important backstop to avoiding catastrophic loss of listed species. It demands a focus on extinction risk and survival through recovery/delisting thresholds. In the Snake River basin, **listed species are NOT meeting ESA this threshold and are on a trajectory towards extinction.**

HEALTHY AND HARVESTABLE POPULATIONS

The Columbia Basin Partnership is a consortium of 32 stakeholders including sovereign tribes, states, agricultural interests, fisheries, and NGOs. This group established a higher threshold than the above goal—**healthy and harvestable**—as the population goal for Snake River anadromous fish (NMFS 2020). These population goals are intended to be consistent with U.S. treaty and trust obligations to Tribes.

TREATY OBLIGATIONS

Tribal Nations, in their treaties with the United States, ceded millions of acres of their homelands in the Columbia River Basin in exchange for and acknowledgement of rights already held, including, critically, the right to fish in all “usual and accustomed places.” This exchange was premised on a notion that the salmon and steelhead resources of the region were “inexhaustible.” This proved false as salmon and steelhead disappeared or significantly declined at many Tribal fishing locations. Even if ESA thresholds were achieved, this would not meet the obligation of the federal government to honor its treaty obligations to the Tribes.



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