



## **OPPOSE H.R. 3144: The “Columbia River Salmon Extinction Act”**

**Background:** Beginning in the 1930s, the federal government installed 31 dams on the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest; the dams generate hydropower and make up the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). Multiple federal courts have found that FCRPS operations endanger the existence of the Pacific Northwest’s salmon runs in violation of the law. Federal agencies have been ordered to develop new operation plans to recover dwindling salmon populations, but each new plan has been struck down by the courts as insufficient. The current operation plan is based on a 2014 biological opinion which the Oregon U.S. District Court found insufficient on May 4, 2016.

**Summary of H.R. 3144:** H.R. 3144 would mandate use of the most recent FCRPS operation plan until at least 2022, and maybe indefinitely. Far beyond prescribing status quo operations, the bill prohibits any, “structural modification, action, study, or engineering plan that restricts electrical generation” at any Federal Columbia Power System hydroelectric dam without a future act of Congress.

### **Concerns:**

- **H.R. 3144 violates bedrock environmental law.** Federal agencies and courts have concluded FCRPS operations cause significant harm to the thirteen species or populations of Columbia or Snake River salmon and steelhead listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Instead of allowing responsive, science-based fisheries management that will recover these species, H.R. 3144 locks in a failing operation plan that unquestionably harms some of our nation’s most iconic fisheries.
- **H.R. 3144 harms businesses.** Businesses and trade groups oppose H.R. 3144 because of the economic harm it will do to commercial and recreational fishing, guiding and outdoor retail businesses, and restaurants and food industries in the Pacific Northwest.
- **H.R. 3144 hurts Pacific Northwest tribes.** Native peoples of the Pacific Northwest ceded most of their ancestral homeland to the United States in exchange for the right to catch salmon and steelhead at accustomed places. The federal government has a long history of failing to protect these fishing rights. H.R. 3144 would further harm tribal fisheries, which are a critically important source of sustenance and are of great cultural and religious significance.
- **H.R. 3144 is an attack on the legal process.** The bill would overturn legally sound court decisions – by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Oregon U.S. District Court – because the bill’s sponsors don’t like them.
- **H.R. 3144 hurts rate-payers.** The current, failing, operations plan doesn’t work for the environment or energy consumers. Instead of allowing changes that could benefit the environment and rate-payers in the long run, H.R. 3144 shortsightedly locks in the status quo.

H.R. 3144 is opposed by the Governors of Washington and Oregon, as well as numerous conservation, business, and tribal interests, including the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations, the Northwest Guides and Anglers Association, American Whitewater, NW Energy Coalition, the Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition, Earthjustice, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife, Oceana, the Coastal Trollers Association, the National Wildlife Federation, the League of Conservation Voters, and the Nez Perce Tribe.