

## #5 WHITE SALMON RIVER

THREAT: CONDIT DAM

### SUMMARY

There is incredible potential for the White Salmon River to once again be home to abundant wild salmon and steelhead runs. But before this vision can be realized, the 94 year-old Condit Dam, which blocks all salmon and steelhead from most of the river, must be removed. Not only is dam removal the best choice for the river ecosystem, it also makes economic sense. The time for action is now: the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) must issue a dam removal order that respects a carefully negotiated multi-party settlement agreement calling for dam removal in 2008. This is an extraordinary restoration opportunity we simply cannot afford to miss.

### THE RIVER

From the snowy slopes of Mount Adams in southwest Washington, the White Salmon River flows 45 miles to its confluence with the Columbia River, just upstream of Bonneville Dam. More than 20 miles of the White Salmon River are federally designated as Wild and Scenic and the lower 3.3 miles of the river are part of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

The rich natural resources and beauty of the area support multiple industries including agriculture, timber, recreation and tourism. Fea-

turing steep, breathtaking canyons and continuous rapids, the White Salmon is nationally recognized as a premier whitewater destination. Ten outfitters run commercial trips on the river, and at least 25,000 boaters use the White Salmon each year, bringing an important economic influx to the local community.

Before Condit Dam was built, the White Salmon River was home to abundant runs of salmon and steelhead that provided an important source of food, as well as spiritual and cultural values to the Native Americans of the area.

### THE THREAT

Built in 1913 to generate hydropower, Condit Dam played an important role in the history and development of the area. But the benefits have come with a high cost to the river's integrity. The 125-foot tall dam has no fish passage, limiting salmon and steelhead to the lower three miles of river. The dam disrupts natural river flows, as well as the movement of spawning gravel and large woody debris, which are important habitat building-blocks. Condit Dam is a leading reason why the river's salmon and steelhead populations are listed as threatened or endangered.

Condit Dam produces little electricity (an average of 10 megawatts, which is only 0.1 percent of dam owner PacifiCorp's total power production) and a 2002 study conducted for the local public utility district concluded that the dam is not cost-effective. Independent analysis by PacifiCorp similarly concluded that operating the dam under modern requirements — including basic protections under the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act — does not make economic sense. Faced with the mounting costs of operating the aging dam, PacifiCorp signed an agreement in 1999 with diverse interests including conservation and recreation groups, the Yakama Indian Nation and government agencies, to remove the dam.

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

As long as Condit Dam remains standing, it will prevent the restoration of a healthy river ecosystem. For runs of salmon and steelhead to thrive, Condit Dam must be removed. The Bio-



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DAM REMOVAL IS NOT ONLY THE BEST CHOICE FOR THE RIVER ECOSYSTEM, IT ALSO MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE.



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Salmon River, FERC must regulate the decommissioning of a hydropower dam for the greater public interest.

FERC should responsibly serve this interest by identifying the specific actions that need to be taken to support this remarkable restoration opportunity. It must lay out a clear and achievable path that honors the carefully crafted settlement agreement and keeps the dam removal schedule on track for 2008.

RESTORING A FREE-FLOWING WHITE SALMON RIVER WILL BOLSTER SALMON RECOVERY EFFORTS AND BOOST RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

## TAKE ACTION

[WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/ENDANGEREDRIVERS](http://WWW.AMERICANRIVERS.ORG/ENDANGEREDRIVERS)

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logical Opinion issued by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries cautions that leaving the dam in place could lead to the "long-term decline" and increased risk of extinction of listed salmon and steelhead. NOAA calls dam removal "the most fail-safe method to safely pass fish through the project area."

PacifiCorp is taking responsibility for removal and has agreed to cover the costs of dam deconstruction and river restoration. Removing the dam will give salmon access to 14 miles and steelhead access to 33 miles of cold, clean, high-quality habitat in the White Salmon. Runs are predicted to be re-established by 2030, giving a boost to regional salmon recovery efforts and allowing for the restoration of tribal fishing opportunities. Salmon will become a nutrient-rich food source for wildlife including osprey and bald eagle.

The recreation and tourism industries will also benefit from a restored river. Dam removal will open up five additional miles of river for rafting and kayaking and will create additional recreational opportunities on the river.

## WHAT MUST BE DONE

FERC oversees the operation of non-federal hydropower dams. In the case of the White

