

**PRESS RELEASE
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**Obama administration officials begin Northwest listening session on
Columbia-Snake salmon policy**

Fishermen, salmon advocates hold rally in Portland

PORTLAND, Ore. — High-level Obama administration officials, including NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco and White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley, today kicked off an in-region “listening session” as part of the administration’s 30-60 day review of Columbia and Snake River salmon policy.

Officials will be meeting today with representatives from Northwest states and Tribes at the Lloyd Center Doubletree Hotel in Portland. Fishermen and salmon advocates, who did not receive a requested meeting with administration officials, will hold a rally outside the hotel with fishing boats, kayaks and drift boats to thank the Obama administration for this week’s listening session and stake their economic claim in the Columbia-Snake salmon plan debate.

“The fact that we’re having to haul our fishing boats here today illustrates the basic problem: more and more boats are having to stay docked because we have lost so many family-wage fishing jobs,” said Steve Fick, a commercial fisherman from Astoria and president of Fishhawk Fisheries. “In terms of Columbia-Snake salmon declines, we’ve already lost more than 25,000 jobs. This hemorrhaging must stop.”

Among those hardest hit by the Columbia-Snake salmon crisis are commercial and sport fishermen. Repeated fishery closures and cutbacks in recent years have harmed river and coastal family businesses and livelihoods. Fishing groups have been at the forefront of this legal battle for decades. Spring chinook returns are down again this year and fishermen are hurting now more than ever.

“As salmon have declined, so have our jobs and towns,” said Marty Sherman, a Northwest sport fisherman. “Failed federal salmon policies on the Columbia and Snake rivers bear much of the blame. We’re hopeful that the Obama administration will listen to the unique economic perspective we have as fishermen and help the fishing industry to recover some jobs.”

On Wednesday, officials will take a tour of Lower Monumental Dam in

southeastern Washington. Scientists have said that this dam and three others on the Lower Snake River should be breached in order to restore wild salmon and steelhead; some Snake River stocks have plummeted by 90 percent since the lower river dams were completed in the mid-1970s. On Thursday, the delegation will meet with agency leaders in Seattle before returning to Washington, D.C.

Support for changing course on Columbia-Snake salmon policy has been growing in recent months. More than 70 members of Congress, a former Northwest governor, over 115 businesses, hundreds of fishing organizations, scientists and the heads of major national conservation groups have urged the Obama administration to convene a “solutions table” to help forge a long-lasting resolution to this issue.

Last week, U.S. District Court Judge James Redden indicated to federal agencies in a letter to the parties that the 2008 Columbia-Snake salmon plan — a holdover from the Bush administration — remains seriously flawed under science and law. In his letter, Judge Redden said: “Federal defendants have spent the better part of the last decade treading water, and avoiding their obligations under the Endangered Species Act... We simply cannot afford to waste another decade.”

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Save Our Wild Salmon is a nationwide coalition of conservation organizations, river groups, fishing associations, businesses, and taxpayer and clean energy advocates working collectively to restore abundant, sustainable wild salmon to the rivers, streams and oceans of the Western salmon states.