

Background information from Save Our wild Salmon Coalition:

The [Northwest Power and Conservation Council](#) was established by Congress under the Northwest Power Act of 1980. It is composed of two governor-appointed representatives from each of the four Northwest states – Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

The Council is responsible for developing and periodically amending a fish and wildlife program for the Columbia River Basin to “protect, mitigate, and enhance” fish and wildlife affected by the development and operation of the hydroelectric facilities on the Columbia River and its tributaries, *while* assuring the Pacific Northwest has an affordable and reliable power supply.

NPCC’s Fish and Wildlife Program defines the regional goals and measures necessary for mitigating harm to fish from Columbia and Snake River hydropower operations. These are then incorporated into NPCC’s 20-year [Regional Power Plan](#), which is being revised later this year. The Power Plan guides how Bonneville Power Administration operates the dams. It is therefore imperative that the final 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program define all necessary hydropower operations to recover endangered salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin.

NPCC released its [draft 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program](#) on December 17. It does several good things, including maintaining the long-held interim recovery goal of 5 million adult salmon and steelhead returning annually to the Columbia River Basin. Unfortunately, the draft plan omits key recommendations of the region’s state and Tribal fishery managers – in particular, not accommodating elevated levels of “spill” over the dams through August 31 of each year – one of the most crucial timeframes to protect wild juvenile fish during their outmigration.

Under the Northwest Power Act of 1980, NPCC is legally required to defer to the region’s state and Tribal fishery and wildlife experts on what measures are needed to protect fish and achieve recovery goals. With the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement abandoned by the current Administration, continued efforts to weaken the Endangered Species Act at the federal level, and significant regional energy resource planning underway, the NPCC’s Fish and Wildlife Program and subsequent Ninth Power Plan is the best path to mitigate further harm to fish from hydropower operations in the Columbia and Snake rivers and make actionable progress towards recovery goals.

The 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program and subsequent Ninth Power Plan provide an opportunity for our region to chart a course towards affordable, efficient, reliable energy that also protects and restores harvestable and abundant fish populations.