

February 13, 2026

Kym Buzdygon
Director of Public Affairs
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW Sixth Avenue, Suite 1100
Portland, Oregon 97204

RE: Comments on the Draft 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program

Dear Ms. Buzdygon,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program. Friends of the San Juans is a nonprofit organization established in 1979 and based in Friday Harbor, Washington, with the mission to bring people and nature together to protect the San Juan Islands and the Salish Sea through education, science, policy, and law. Friends of the San Juans was a co-petitioner that led to the federal listing of the Southern Resident killer whales as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The protection and recovery of the Southern Residents continues to be one of our top priorities.

The Columbia River Basin salmon populations are critical to the health and prosperity of Southern Residents, and many of the Chinook salmon that Southern Residents feed on come from the Columbia River Basin and are listed as threatened or endangered.

Given the Trump Administration's [withdrawal from the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement](#) and its [lack of action to advance a national effort to recover native fish populations throughout the Columbia Basin](#), this draft Program represents the strongest available pathway to mitigate the harms that Columbia and Snake River dam operations impose on threatened salmon and steelhead.

The overarching goal of this Program must be the restoration of 5 million salmon to the Columbia River Basin. State and Tribal fisheries managers have already identified strategies capable of achieving this objective, and we urge the Council to incorporate the following actions:

1. **Prioritize elevated spill through August 31, annually.** Increased spill is essential to support salmon and steelhead migration, particularly for juvenile fish migrating in late August whose survival is important for maintaining genetic diversity. Elevated spill levels should be identified as a priority hydropower operations measure.

2. **Increase funding and strengthen support for the Fish Passage Center.** The Fish Passage Center, including the Comparative Survival Study and the Smolt Monitoring Program, plays a critical role in providing independent scientific information. Expanded funding and continued support are necessary to ensure accurate monitoring and effective fish passage strategies.
3. **Advance affordable, reliable, and new clean energy resources that protect salmon.** The Program should chart a clear path toward developing clean energy alternatives that both maintain system reliability and safeguard the ecological conditions needed to restore harvestable and abundant salmon populations.
4. **Ensure accountability for the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).** BPA must be held responsible for meeting the Program's goals, fulfilling its fisheries obligations, and honoring treaty commitments to Tribal Nations. Establishing a 2035 timeline for achieving the 5-million-salmon goal will help provide meaningful accountability.
5. **Include breaching the four lower Snake River dams as an action requiring analysis.** Breaching the lower Snake River dams—and replacing their power with clean, renewable resources—should be explicitly included as an action for consideration in the next Power Plan. Scientific consensus shows that removing these four dams would have the single greatest positive impact on rebuilding salmon populations.

Friends of the San Juans urges the Northwest Power and Conservation Council to chart a course towards affordable, efficient, and reliable energy that also protects and restores abundant fish populations, which will support the recovery of the Southern Resident killer whale population. Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and for your continued work to support fish and wildlife recovery throughout the Columbia Basin.

Sincerely,



Tina Whitman
Senior Science Director