

**Testimony for BPA Hearings in Tacoma**

Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. My name is Dr. Robert L. Vadas, Jr., a professional fisheries biologist from Olympia, WA. I am also an angler who is an active member of Trout Unlimited, an organization with over 6000 members here in Washington state. I am here this evening to remind BPA of its obligations to fully fund effective salmon and steelhead recovery in the Columbia River basin.

As it sets its new rates for the 2007-2009 timeframe, BPA and its customers need to clearly acknowledge their commitment to fund and restore fish populations imperiled by the Columbia/Snake River hydrosystem. As you know, the Northwest Power Act requires "equitable treatment" of fish and power. Numerous extirpations that have already occurred, 12-13 populations are currently threatened or endangered, and wild adult salmon are returning at only about 1% of their historic levels, such that Pacific salmonids are not getting the protections that they desperately need. Salmon runs are not recovering; they are not OK. They need leadership from BPA and others in the region, or many more runs will be extirpated.

Right now, BPA is getting a tremendous amount of pressure to reduce rates. But the salmon program is not a place with any fat that can be cut out of the budget. Nor can BPA's investments in salmon recovery be considered a significant contributor to overall rates. Nevertheless, it is the first place that BPA and its customers go when they are looking to reduce overall costs. This is wrong; cutting funds necessary to restore salmon is not an option because it violates federal laws like the Endangered Species Act. BPA needs to live up to its legal and ethical obligations to restore a healthy fishery to the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Right now, there is also a tremendous amount of uncertainty about salmon recovery, given that populations are declining and often facing extirpation. The federal government's most recent wasteful and ineffective plan has been rejected again by the courts, and we are on the front end of yet another year-long rewrite process. So there is no legal plan in place, and it is not clear what protections salmon and steelhead will receive during the 2006 migrations.

With so much uncertainty, and such an embarrassing record of failure by the federal government, including BPA, I am here to say "stop". BPA and other federal agencies need to live up to their obligations to recover our fisheries. Unfortunately, as a result of the past failures, salmon need more help, not less. Now is not the time to cut salmon spending.

Instead, what salmon and our salmon economy need are smart investments to fund scientifically supported actions that will actually recover healthy runs. So far, BPA has not made that commitment, but it needs to. We need to turn salmon declines into salmon recovery, and BPA needs to be part of the solution, not the problem.

Fully fund effective salmon recovery, given the cumulative impacts that are causing run declines; don't blame the victim. Please become a leader in solving this Pacific Northwest problem to benefit our fisheries economy and culture. Thank you.

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