

Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association

Media Release—October 2, 2017

Killing Idaho Fish Inept Management Encouraged by Endangered Species Act Litigation

In an evidentiary hearing motion brought before U.S. Federal District (Oregon) Judge Michael Simon, the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association (CSRIA) presented unassailable evidence that fish managers' 2015 decisions decimated about 65% of the wild, spring chinook returns to Idaho (2017 adult fish returns). Other hatchery fish suffered as well, and the final numbers for returning Idaho steelhead will document further losses.

The records confirm that the Columbia River fish managers allowed Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed salmon and steelhead migrations to remain in the Lower Snake River, during extremely poor in-river conditions, rather than rely on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' juvenile fish transportation program. The fish were exposed to adverse river conditions that proved fatal, as documented by the fish managers' recently released evaluation (Comparative Survival Study, 2017).

The evidence clearly shows that the fish managers ignored the legally required, ESA (Biological Opinion) "spread the risk" policy, in the spring 2015, when they transported only 13% of juvenile salmon/steelhead during low flow and high temperature conditions—when young fish are the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of remaining in-river. This was the lowest percent transported since records were first kept in 1993.

NOAA Fisheries' scientists attempted to obtain an early spring, 2015 start date for transportation--to get the juvenile fish out of the river during poor survival conditions--but other state agency fish managers defiantly blocked this crucial action.

CSRIA representative Darryll Olsen characterized the 2015 fish kill, "as defying every manner of sound judgement, and the sad product of 25-years of irrational ESA litigation in the Oregon District Court. The Federal Administration, faced with fish managers' stark incompetence, must invoke a formal ESA Committee (God Squad) Review action, as required by the ESA statutes."

Additional Information Attached and Contact: 509-783-1623