



June 29, 2018

The Honorable Mike Crapo
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James Risch
483 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Northwest Senate Delegation Members:

As Governors that are working to recover Columbia basin salmon and steelhead, we urge you to support legislation aimed at reducing sea lion predation on threatened and endangered and other at-risk fish populations. Although several hundred million dollars are invested annually to rebuild these native fish runs, their health and sustainability is threatened unless Congress acts to enhance protection from increasing sea lion predation.

Over the last decade, predation by sea lions on salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, and lamprey in the Columbia River has increased dramatically. State researchers have estimated that sea lions consume about 20 percent of the entire spring Chinook run. More recent year research by NOAA Fisheries has found that up to 43 percent of spring Chinook adult salmon disappear between the estuary and Bonneville Dam. Much of that loss can be attributed to sea lions.

The risk is not unique to spring Chinook. Oregon scientists have concluded that wild winter steelhead are at extreme risk of extinction if the current rate of sea lion predation continues in the Willamette River. Additionally, Columbia River sturgeon are being impacted by sea lion predation at alarming rates.

It's hard to imagine successful recovery of threatened and endangered fish populations with these high levels of interception by sea lions.

The Senate companion to the recently passed House bill, S. 3119, sponsored by Sen. Maria Cantwell and Sen. James Risch, would augment existing authorities and allow for quicker and more efficient intervention while still limiting lethal removal, changes that are vital to the long-

term survival of salmonid species in our states. We believe the final version should allow wildlife managers to address sea lion populations within their appropriate jurisdictions.

No one wants to harm these great marine mammals, but effectively dealing with a small fraction of the healthy sea lion population is preferable to losing unique and irreplaceable species of salmon.

Sincerely,



C. L. "Butch" Otter
Governor
State of Idaho



Kate Brown
Governor
State of Oregon



Jay Inslee
Governor
State of Washington