May 15, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: FY27 Appropriations for Columbia Basin Salmon Fisheries

Dear Chair Collins and Vice Chair Murray, and Chair Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The Columbia Basin Collaborative is a collaboration of 78 entities consisting of states, Tribes, federal agencies, and stakeholders that are developing recommendations for achieving abundant and harvestable salmon and steelhead in the Columbia Basin. The CBC is committed to a collaborative framework that recognizes Tribal cultural values and rights and addresses the cultural significance of fish, as well as the needs of the regional economies, including but not limited to agriculture, transportation, fishing, recreation, port operations, and state and Tribal fisheries.

The CBC aims to achieve the consensus supported quantitative and qualitative goals for salmon and steelhead documented in the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force (CBPTF) Phase 2 Report, as adopted by the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC). The states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, Tribes, and stakeholders of the Columbia Basin Collaborative[1] write to request that Congress include the highest possible level of funding

[1] Although staff from federal entities are part of the Columbia Basin Collaborative, they did not participate in the conversations and deliberation that led to this letter and request. Although the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe are members of the CBC and expect to engage with the CBC in the future, they did not participate in the conversations and deliberations that led to the requests in this letter and take no position on the requests in this letter.

in the Fiscal Year 2027 ("FY27") appropriations bills for federal programs that advance the restoration of healthy and abundant salmon populations in the Columbia River Basin.

Some members of the CBC are seeking funding from federal, state, and private sources to support our collaborative efforts. This will allow us to continue developing and implementing recommendations aimed at achieving abundant salmon populations. These efforts may include addressing or revisiting strategies for predation management, habitat restoration, and hatchery operations and maintenance.

Background:

Salmon and steelhead are integral to the culture, identity, economy, and ecosystem of the Columbia Basin. The CBPTF identified that, "reliable and predictable funding is essential. Funding must be targeted to achieve the Partnership's Quantitative and Qualitative Goals. New funding sources should be identified for existing and projected future projects, including the blocked areas in the Upper Columbia and the Upper Snake River basins. Funding must come from multiple sources, consider the burden across communities, and account for past, present, and potential impacts."

FY27 Appropriations Requests:

As Congress formulates FY27 appropriations bills, we ask that you make robust investments to support salmon restoration efforts in the Columbia Basin, the recreational and commercial fishing industry, and the fulfillment of the United States' treaty, executive order, and trust obligations to tribes. While there are dozens of important federal programs that must be adequately funded to achieve these goals, we urge you to prioritize funding for the following key programs at no less than the levels discussed below.

- **Mitchell Act Operations & Maintenance (National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS))**

  Summary: The Mitchell Act allows federal agencies to work with Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and the lower Columbia River Treaty Tribes to operate and maintain a series of fish hatcheries and passage facilities focused on improving declining and imperiled salmon and steelhead runs in the Columbia Basin, conserve unique and locally adapted fish populations, maintain economically viable Tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries, and provide prey for endangered federal and state listed Southern Resident orcas. The Mitchell Act currently funds 70 programs that produce approximately 40 million fish annually, or nearly 30% of the total salmon and steelhead hatchery production in the Columbia River Basin. The requested FY27 increase is necessary to make up for over a decade of flat funding during a high inflationary period. Without full funding of the Operation

and Maintenance budget, hatcheries in the Pacific Northwest will begin closing, and this mandatory mitigation obligation will go unmet.

Funding Request: We urge Congress to include at least $34.5 million for the Mitchell Act in the FY27 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) bill.

- **Pacific Salmon (NMFS)**

  Summary: The Pacific Salmon program funds salmon recovery efforts, habitat conservation planning, research and monitoring, and other actions required under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, Congress amended the Marine Mammal Protection Act to provide States and Tribes more flexibility to control pinnipeds that are having a significant negative impact on ESA listed salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon in the Columbia Basin. Federal funding is needed to augment State and Tribal funds to fully implement the program and reduce predation on ESA listed species.

  Funding Request: We urge Congress to include at least $96 million for Pacific Salmon in the FY27 CJS bill. We also request report language calling for at least $5.5 million for the Columbia River pinniped removal program, of which a portion of the funding should also be directed to NMFS to update West Coast pinniped species stock assessments and assess non-lethal deterrent options.

- **Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (NMFS)**

  Summary: The Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) was created to support the conservation and recovery of salmon across rivers, watersheds, and coastal habitats in Western states. Since 2000, this program has compelled effective, collaborative approaches to salmon recovery across federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector partners. In Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho, California, and Nevada, PCSRF investments have contributed to over 15,942 projects, and have helped restore more than 12,000 miles of streams and over 1.2 million acres of fish habitat.

  Funding Request: We urge Congress to include $100 million for the PCSRF in the FY27 CJS bill in order to continue the level of current restoration efforts under this program and to keep up with rising project costs.

- **Pacific Salmon Treaty (NMFS, Department of Interior, and State Department)**

Summary: The Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) is critical to meeting the provisions of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), addressing tribal fishing rights, and maintaining sustainable U.S. fisheries. The treaty, signed by United States and Canada in 1985, provides a framework for the two countries to cooperate on the management of Pacific salmon.

Funding Request: We urge Congress to include at least $41.5 million for Pacific Salmon Treaty in the FY27 CJS bill; $11.16 million in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill; and $6.5 million in the State Foreign Operations and Related Programs (SFOPS)/National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs bill.

- **Columbia River Fish Mitigation (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE))**

  Summary: The Columbia River Fish Mitigation program (CRFM) enables USACE to continue to work with other federal, state and local agencies, using the best available science and adaptive management, to help restore degraded ecosystem functions and processes and maintain and improve fish passage infrastructure in the Columbia Basin (the CRFM applies to federal dams in both the Columbia and Willamette basins). $750 million over the next eight to ten years will be needed to address the large backlog of historically underfunded fish passage infrastructure needs at the mainstem Columbia River dams. These investments should be prioritized to ensure the dams operate safely and effectively for fish passage and other purposes.[2] Repairing broken spillway hoists and spillway fish detection installation at McNary Dam should be an urgent FY27 priority, as should at least $5 million worth of lamprey passage projects.

  Funding Request: We urge Congress to include at least $99 million for CRFM in the FY27 Energy & Water Development (E&W) bill. At least $75 million of this funding should go toward projects at the lower Columbia River dams. We also urge report language directing USACE to continue their sea lion predation and abundance observations at Bonneville Dam.

- **Willamette Valley Fish Production (USACE)**

  Summary: USACE is required to mitigate for the lost fish production at the thirteen dams above Willamette Falls. The operations and maintenance budget for five hatcheries in this system has not kept pace with the actual costs. The USACE Portland District has announced that the trout hatchery production will be eliminated and that there will be reductions to releases of summer steelhead and

[2] See e.g., the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission's Overview of Columbia River USACE Needs at: https://critfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CRITFC-USACE-Fish-Budget_2022.pdf

Spring Chinook at current funding levels. The requested FY27 increase is necessary to make up for over a decade of flat funding during a high inflationary period. Without full funding of the operations and maintenance budget, this mandatory mitigation obligation will go unmet. [The Willamette funding should be in addition to the CRFM funding for the Columbia River projects.]

***Funding Request*: We urge Congress to include at least $37.1 million in the FY27 E&W bill for hatchery operations and maintenance at the following lakes in Oregon: Applegate, Lost Creek, Cottage Grove, Dorena, Fall Creek, Cougar, Detroit, Green Peter-Foster, Hills Creek, and Lookout Point.**

- **Aquatic Invasive Species Control (USACE, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS))**

  Summary: In September 2023, Idaho confirmed the presence of quagga mussels in the Snake River near Twin Falls. This discovery sent a shock wave through multiple federal and state agencies and tribal governments in the Columbia Basin. Of particular concern is the potential impact of invasive mussels on Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead. A zebra or quagga mussel invasion downstream could drastically increase the cost of maintaining juvenile and adult salmon and steelhead passage infrastructure to more than $100 million annually. Additionally, Golden mussels, a quagga and zebra mussel-like invasive species, was recently detected in California's San Joaquin Delta. Since then, they have spread through the state's aqueduct system as far south as Los Angeles and have been found on watercraft moving over land. Likely introduced by shipping ballast water, their high salinity tolerance poses a direct and growing threat to the Columbia River Basin and western U.S.

  ***Funding Request*: We urge Congress to increase funding to at least $55 million in the FY27 E&W bill for the USACE Aquatic Plant Control and Watercraft Inspection Decontamination, with $30 million specifically for watercraft inspections and $10 million for monitoring. We also request that Congress provide funding for invasive mussel prevention, monitoring, and management in the FY27 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, including $8 million to BIA's Invasive Species Program for the Northwest Region, $5 million to USFWS's Quagga - Zebra Action Plan for Western U.S. Waters, $5 million to USFWS for the development of a Golden Mussel Action Plan, and $5 million to USFWS's State and Interstate Aquatic Nuisance Species Management program.**

Thank you for your consideration of these important requests.

Respectfully,
The states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, the Tribes, and the stakeholder representatives of the Columbia Basin Collaborative.

CC: Oregon Congressional Delegation

Washington Congressional Delegation

Idaho Congressional Delegation