

June 17, 2011

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



Dear Senator Cantwell:

We are very concerned – and oppose -- President Obama’s nomination of Rebecca Wodder, former president of American Rivers, to be Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of Interior. Ms. Wodder is well-known in the Northwest for her repeated demands to remove the four lower Snake River dams, the only way, she contends, to recover Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed salmon stocks, a position that simply does not fit with the facts.

It is clear from the unchanging nature of her statements over the years that Ms. Wodder lacks any appreciation for the fish passage improvements made to the river system and for the many and multiple benefits the hydroelectric system provides to the Northwest. Most troubling, Ms. Wodder’s continued pursuit of dam removal and statements that extinction is imminent show she has missed or purposefully ignored the massive effort made to protect and recover salmon species and the amazing success in increasing the returns of listed stocks.

New technologies have been installed at *every single one* of the dams and major changes made in hydro operations are resulting in salmon survivals in the river that are the highest seen since the 1980s. Over \$100 million *each year* is being spent to protect and restore degraded habitat in major river tributaries and the estuary. As a result, returning numbers of adult salmon are some of the highest seen in decades. Yet Ms. Wodder seems unaware of, or dismisses, one of the most comprehensive and expensive efforts seen anywhere in the country for protected species.

And, while Ms. Wodder touts an ability to work collaboratively with interests in fish and wildlife protection, that skill has been noticeably absent in Northwest issues including the Administration’s collaborative approach to developing and implementing a new hydro system Biological Opinion (“BiOp”) for salmon. Under her leadership, American Rivers chose continued litigation rather than working together with the many Northwest parties that developed a consensus for action in President Obama’s 2008/2010 supplemental BiOp.

As Assistant Secretary, Ms. Wodder will have great influence over positions taken by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as it participates in the federal effort to recover these stocks – and in setting policy for the agency as a whole on ESA issues. With her history of advocating removal of dams and specifically the lower Snake River dams regardless of progress, we do not believe Ms. Wodder can set

aside her strongly-held beliefs and render impartial judgments. Consciously or not, her entrenched anti-dam mindset will infuse her every deliberation and will undermine FWS support for any BiOp that does not include dam removal.

Our Columbia-Snake River system feeds the economic engine of the Pacific Northwest. Without the clean, renewable hydroelectric power generated by the federal dams, the Northwest could never have built the infrastructure and industry it did early in the 20th Century and would not now be the economic and environmental leader it is.

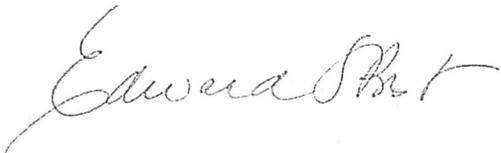
This hydroelectric system keeps the Northwest's carbon footprint at half that of the rest of the country, integrates new emerging renewable resources such as wind, provides irrigation to farmers who feed the Northwest and the world, and includes a river highway that supports jobs and transports goods that fuel the northwest's economy.

We are proud of our environmental stewardship in the Northwest, but we are concerned that others claiming the environmental mantle do not understand that there is a balance to everything that must occur if we are to maintain the environment along with a healthy, sustainable economy.

Therefore, we strongly oppose Ms. Wodder's appointment and ask you to do the same.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ed Brost".

Ed Brost
General Manager

Cc: Northwest Senate Delegation

Ltr #: 2011-140