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CHAIRMAN
CONGRESSIONAL WESTERN CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

March 23, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting $5,000,000 in funding for the Columbia River Section 120 Pinniped Removal Program in fiscal year 2024. The entity to receive funding for this project is the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, located at PO Box 43200 Olympia, WA 98504-3200.

The funding would be used for the Columbia River Section 120 Pinniped Removal Program. Since 2002, sea lions in the Columbia River have significantly impacted endangered and threatened stocks of salmon and steelhead. Sea lions also prey on mature sturgeon below Bonneville Dam and on listed salmon and steelhead runs in the Willamette River and other tributaries to the Columbia River. Thirty-two wild salmon populations bound for the upper Columbia and Snake rivers are vulnerable to predation by sea lions immediately below Bonneville Dam. Other ESA- listed salmon and steelhead populations passing through the lower Columbia River when sea lions are feeding include lower Columbia River Chinook, lower Columbia River steelhead, middle Columbia River steelhead, Snake River Basin steelhead, upper Willamette River Chinook, and Upper Willamette River steelhead. All six of these are listed as "threatened" under the ESA.

Despite non-lethal and limited lethal-take measures, the number of salmon and steelhead consumed by sea lions below Bonneville Dam more than doubled between 2006 and 2015. Congress passed an amendment to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) in December 2018 to provide state and tribal resource managers greater flexibility to manage sea lions in future years. In order to fully implement the program under the new permit, the States and Tribes are requesting $5,000,000 in federal funds.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because this program is an example of a regional partnership between WDFW, IDFG, ODFW, and CRITFC. Pinniped predation serves as the single greatest mortality event for spring chinook. Impeding habituation of sea lions and subsequent predation is one of the key components to salmon and steelhead survival.

The project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized in the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. § 1451 et seq.). I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress