

September 2, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
2330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harriet Hageman
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources
Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Subcommittee
1227 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Val Hoyle
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Subcommittee
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Westerman, Chair Hageman, Ranking Member Huffman and Ranking Member Hoyle:

The undersigned sporting and conservation organizations write on behalf of our members and supporters to express strong opposition to the Defending Our Dams Act (H.R. 2073). This legislation would prohibit federal funding for any study or action related to breaching or altering the Lower Snake River dams, effectively halting collaborative, science-based efforts to restore wild salmon and steelhead in the Columbia-Snake River Basin.

As anglers and conservationists, we understand the need to balance energy production with the protection of our natural resources and outdoor traditions. But H.R. 2073 threatens to undo decades of work by sportsmen, Tribal nations, conservation organizations, and business leaders to recover salmon and steelhead—iconic species that fuel our outdoor economy and define the heritage of the Pacific Northwest.

The economic stakes are directly tied to the health of Snake River salmon and steelhead runs. These fish are the backbone of recreational and commercial fisheries across the Columbia River Basin. In Washington alone, recreational fishing supports over 12,850 jobs and generates \$424 million in net economic value annually. Snake River-origin fish contribute significantly to these fisheries, particularly rural river communities that rely on strong upriver returns. Across the basin, salmon and steelhead fisheries generate \$142 million in personal income each year. As Snake River runs decline, fishing seasons are shortened or closed altogether, leading to real economic losses for outfitters, guides, tackle shops, and rural towns. By blocking recovery efforts, H.R. 2073 would further jeopardize these livelihoods and the communities that depend on them.

This bill also contradicts the Northwest Power Act of 1980, which mandates that fish and wildlife receive equitable treatment alongside power generation. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is legally obligated to mitigate the impacts of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife. Preventing federal agencies from even studying dam removal while prohibiting spill directly undermines this congressional mandate and BPA's responsibilities under the law. Moreover, H.R. 2073 disregards the leadership and treaty rights of Tribal nations, many of whom have been at the forefront of salmon recovery. Their voices and expertise must be respected—not sidelined by federal policy.

Instead of obstructing solutions, Congress should advance policies that restore fish populations, strengthen rural economies, and sustain our outdoor heritage. We have an opportunity to invest in modern energy solutions that meet our region's needs without sacrificing the very resources that define it.

We urge you to oppose H.R. 2073 and instead support pragmatic, science-based policies that promote fish recovery, honor Tribal rights, balance reliable and affordable energy production, and protect the outdoor economy. Salmon and steelhead are iconic species and the foundation of a way of life in the Pacific Northwest. We must act boldly to ensure their future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further and explore collaborative solutions that benefit both our fish and our communities.

Sincerely,

American Flyfishing Trade Association
American Sportfishing Association
Association of Northwest Steelheaders
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association
Idaho Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Federation
Trout Unlimited

CC: The Honorable Dan Newhouse