WA Dept. of Ecology's Public Hearing on
Multiple Revisions to WAC 173-201A
Water Quality Standards for Surface Waters of the State of Washington

Oral Testimony from Miles Johnson, Columbia Riverkeeper
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Transcription was provided by PostCAP LLC in Olympia, WA.

Okay. It looks like we have Miles Johnson next.

Hi, welcome. Please state your name clearly for the record.

>> My name is Miles Johnson. I'm senior attorney with Columbia Riverkeeper. I feel a little bit like I'm Ozzy Osbourne up here with my back to the audience.
[CHUCKLES].

>> I would like to say that it would be perfectly easy to record this testimony while addressing the decision makers who hopefully came here to hear it.

I will say that I grew up salmon and steelhead fishing in Oregon. I live along the Columbia. I still like to fish for salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and its tributaries. I have a 10-month-old son who I hope to be able to teach to catch salmon and steelhead better than I currently do. But I think that's in a considerable amount of doubt.

Columbia Riverkeeper, the organization I represent, has 16,000 members in Oregon and Washington. And we work from the estuary to Hanford and beyond to make sure that there are fish in the river and that when you catch those fish, you can take them home and feed them to your family without worrying about whether or not they are safe to eat. I'm here today because more spill is going to mean better survival for juvenile fish through the system. And better fish returns as adults.

There's no reasonable disagreement about whether or not that's going to happen. Sure, you can quibble about, you know, the exact amount of spill that's going to produce the exact survival response. Or you know, whether or not we fully understand the sources of mortality. But that's not really helpful because what we need to do right now is take bold action to correct the trajectory that Snake River and Columbia River salmon and steelhead are on.

You know, yes, you can put fish in a tank and subject them to extreme levels of gas bubble trauma and then you can put those fish that appear to be brown trout maybe in that picture on a slide and it looks bad. But Fish Passage Center and others have handled thousands of juvenile fish over the past several years. The levels of spill that we're contemplating simply do not produce meaningful population level problems for juvenile salmon and steelhead.

What is meaningful at a population level is increasing the amount of spill going through the system.

This is a baby step. It's a necessary first step. We support what Ecology is doing here. But at

the same time it's difficult to watch Ecology take a half step towards what we need to do while tying that to things like the sufficiency of the BiOp consultation or a short duration of monitoring for spill like just two hours out of the day.

I see that my time is up. Thank you.