

Catherine Ruha

I'm writing today because I believe that we must restore the Snake River and its abundant Chinook salmon for the Southern Resident orca to survive and recover. Restoring these salmon runs also benefit sport, commercial and tribal fishing and the economies and communities they support. Salmon need more spill now! I support Alternative #3, in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that provides for a 125% total dissolved gas standard. This standard should be set so it can be employed any time during the year as need may dictate ? and with no conditions attached. This action must be place for the 2020 juvenile out-migration season in order to better support salmon survival and more adult salmon returns. I oppose alternatives 1, 2 and 4 which are temporary and too restrictive. Spill is an essential near-term action to benefit salmon and orca while we work on stronger long-term actions to recover our wild salmon and steelhead. Restoring abundant salmon runs is essential for our critically-endangered Southern Resident orcas. The best available science shows that this TDG standard is biologically appropriate for both the spring and summer voluntary spill seasons, and I urge the Department of Ecology to adopt this as a permanent, year-around standard that can be safely implemented on a 24/7 basis during the juvenile salmon migration season. While I support Alternative #3, I oppose the language that makes implementation conditional on the federal agencies having a legal biological opinion. Our salmon and orca need higher spill regardless of whether the federal agencies have legally valid plan ? particularly since the agencies have historically shown little ability to develop such a plan. The proposed language would undermine the permanent modification of the total dissolved gas standard. This conditional language should be removed. Our salmon and orca thank you for taking action today. We must do this now. The Orca belong here. They must be supported and cared for by restoring the Snake River for so the Chinook populations may also flourish. My heart aches writing this note. I can't imagine life without the Orcas. Their extinction would leave a terrible, irreparable hole in our hearts.