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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NOAA Seeks Comment on Recovery Plan for Middle Columbia River Steelhead

NOAA's Fisheries Service, the federal agency charged with protecting salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act, is seeking public comment on a proposed recovery plan for steelhead in the middle Columbia River.

Today's proposed plan, required under the act, is the product of a collaboration begun by NOAA with help from the Middle Columbia Recovery Forum, a bi-state group that provides guidance on the plan. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board, and Snake River Salmon Recovery Board, along with tribal, state, federal and local stakeholders, were all involved in producing the plan.

"By involving so many local groups, all of which have a passionate interest in seeing that these steelhead once again thrive, we have a proposed recovery plan that's scientifically sound and highly workable," said Bob Lohn, the fishery agency's northwest regional administrator in Seattle. "This plan has objective, measurable criteria to determine when this steelhead population is no longer threatened. It also contains specific actions needed to achieve the plan's goals, and estimates of the time and costs of those actions."

Today's proposed plan is part of a larger commitment made by NOAA's Fisheries Service to develop salmon recovery plans throughout the region. Elements of more than 60 sub-basin and watershed plans from across the northwest are being incorporated into larger regional recovery plans for salmon and steelhead in the interior Columbia basin, the Snake River basin, the Oregon coast and Puget Sound areas. Three of these plans and part of a fourth have already been completed and are now being implemented.

NOAA's Fisheries Service listed these steelhead as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1999. They spawn in tributaries of the Columbia in central and eastern Washington and Oregon. The Middle Columbia Recovery Forum, which NOAA's Fisheries Service will convene regularly, will help collaboration between scientists and recovery planners on both sides of the Columbia River.

See the proposed recovery plan and other helpful documents at:

<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Salmon-Recovery-Planning/Recovery-Domains/Interior-Columbia/Mid-Columbia/Mid-Col-Plans.cfm>. The public may send comments on the plan to Lynn Hatcher, National Marine Fisheries Service, 304 S. Water Street, Suite #201, Ellensburg, WA 98926.

Comments may also be submitted by e mail to: MiddleColumbiaPlan.nwr@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e mail comment the following identifier: Comments on Middle Columbia Steelhead Recovery Plan. Comments may be submitted via fax to 503-872-2737. Deadline is Dec. 23.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

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Contacts for local aspects of this proposed recovery plan are below:

Steve Martin, 509-382-4115 (SE Washington Management Unit: Snake River Salmon Recovery Board)

Alex Conley, 509-453-4104 (Yakima Management Unit: Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board)

Rich Carmichael, 541-962-3754 (Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife)

Nora Berwick, 503-231-6887 (Washington Gorge Management Unit: NOAA Fisheries)