



## Governors Join Regional Efforts to Save Native Fish Stocks in Columbia River Basin

On October 5, 2020, the Governors of Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington pledged to create a collaborative public process to save the struggling native fish stocks of the Columbia River Basin. In their [statement](#), the Governors commit to “work together to rebuild Columbia River salmon and steelhead stocks and to advance the goals of the [Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force](#),” which was convened by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) in 2017. The Governors further committed to a collaborative public process that will be defined by the involvement of the region’s tribes as co-managers of natural resources with specific legal and cultural rights, federal agencies, and stakeholders in the region. Additionally, it authorizes state representatives to work with others in the region to define a future collaborative framework that provides for broad-based participation.

To assist with repopulation of fish, the [Columbia Basin Partnership](#) set qualitative and quantitative goals for 24 stocks of salmon and steelhead. The qualitative goals describe desired outcomes throughout the Columbia Basin and work to capture different social, cultural, economic, and ecological values. Through the qualitative goals a range of numbers indicative of abundance were identified and, wherever possible, are based on goals from existing management plans.

Despite massive local, state, tribal and federal efforts over the past 3 decades, native fish in the Columbia River continue to languish. According to the *Wild Salmon & Steelhead News* (July 2019), “Almost across the board, adult salmon



returns to the Columbia and Snake River continue to head in the wrong direction. Returns so far this season for spring Chinook, sockeye and steelhead all show continued and very troubling declines. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's 2019 forecast for Snake River Spring Chinook, for example, was just 11,200 fish - of which 2,100 were wild fish. (Historic returns numbered in the millions). In late May, forecasts were downgraded twice, with returns occurring at only 30% of these initial projections. As a result of these terrible returns, [Idaho closed Chinook salmon fishing](#) on the Clearwater river in May, with Washington State quickly following suit."

CSG West members from the Columbia River Basin have long been active and vigilant in fostering regional cooperation and dialogue within the Columbia River Basin. Founded in 1998, the [Legislative Council on River Governance](#) (LCRG) formed as a forum for legislators of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington to meet annually to discuss regional issues and seek areas of collaborative action and solutions.