



My name is Steven Hawley. I'm a writer and film-maker. My favorite place on earth—my home—is the Columbia River watershed. And I've devoted a significant chunk of my life trying to protect the last wild places in it; strongholds for salmon that once numbered in the millions each year.

A few years ago, I co-produced and wrote a documentary called *Dammed to Extinction*. It's the story of three unique pods of orcas that spend their summers in the Salish Sea, an area off the coast of Washington that looks like a dog took a bite out of the upper left corner. These orcas hunt and eat chinook salmon. Their grace and intelligence are why some of them, like Shamu, were kidnapped in the 1960s and 70s and sold to marine amusement parks. These whales, known as "southern resident" orcas, survived and rebounded from less than 71 in the mid-1970s to almost a hundred in the mid 1990s. Then salmon they've depended on for centuries dwindled to less than a couple percent of their historic abundance. The whales were listed under the Endangered Species Act in 2005 when there were 88 whales, but since then they have continued to starve and are having trouble carrying their babies to full term. Since their listing, many have died. Now only 75 remain.

The rivers of central Idaho fed these whales with salmon. The Salmon, Clearwater, and Selway rivers once contributed almost half of all the chinook in the Columbia Basin. Imagine a million salmon coming past Riggins, Idaho every summer for thousands of years. Now, less than 10,000 do so. Many are killed by the federal system of dams, including four dams on the lower Snake River, all Idaho Chinook must pass. Some of us ache for some healthy fraction of these fish to return to the River of No Return. And there's good reason to hope it will.

Congressman Mike Simpson has offered the region a proposal to breach four dams on the lower Snake River that science tells us are the biggest impediment to salmon recovery. The proposal was thoughtfully crafted over many years. It's purposely devoid of details, but specific enough to ensure that everyone comes out whole. No one—farmers, utilities, electric customers, taxpayers—takes a hit. We all come out as good or better than before.

Strangely, Simpson's Oregon, Washington and Idaho colleagues in Congress have remained silent, offering nothing in the way of support for his bold vision. That's too bad: this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore what was the world's most prolific river for chinook salmon, as well as invest in the region's infrastructure at a level not seen since the New Deal. An exception to the silence has been Oregon Rep. Earl Blumenauer, who's shown that leaders on opposite sides of the aisle can come

together to remind the nation how to govern. And they're doing it for a river that's a national and world treasure. But we need the rest of the Northwest delegation to get on board. You can help.

Please TAKE ACTION by contacting your members of Congress. Tell them you support Simpson's concept, and that you need them to support it as well. Tell them we could update the region's energy and transportation infrastructure for the 21st century. Tell them we could save salmon, orcas, and money. Tell them about your love for your river, and what having salmon back might mean to you. And to your kids. And their kids.

Politicians, orcas and salmon all have one thing in common: they can't fix our river without us. Without you.

Thanks,  
Steve