



GIFFORD PINCHOT TASK FORCE

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Wind River Dam Will Be Removed This Summer *Dam Removal Project Will Restore Key Reach for Threatened Steelhead*

Wind River, WA – In July of 2008, Skamania County filed an appeal against the Department of Ecology and the United States Forest Service to block the Forest Service's plan to remove the Hemlock Dam on the Wind River. The Hemlock Dam is located on Trout Creek, a tributary to the Wind River, which is about 50 miles east of Portland. Local conservation advocates with the Gifford Pinchot Task Force engaged the Crag Law Center to intervene in the suit to support the Forest Service. The Gifford Pinchot Task Force joined with a local fly fishing group and recreational interests to present the case for dam removal. In late March, after many months of litigation, Skamania County agreed to withdraw its appeal. This summer the dam removal project will go forward.

Hemlock Dam has had a significant impact on threatened lower Columbia River steelhead since its construction in the 1930s. The outdated fish passage system created nearly insurmountable obstacles for the basin's threatened steelhead population. "Hemlock Dam removal will help restore wild steelhead to the Wind River watershed and make the Wind River system one of the only free-flowing rivers in Northwest from its headwaters to the confluence with the Columbia River," said Emily Platt, executive director of the Gifford Pinchot Task Force.

Since the dam was constructed over 75 years ago, the small reservoir behind it has been filled in with sediment and the slack water created high temperatures dangerous to wild fish. The steelhead that attempt to migrate past the dam and through the reservoir's warm waters are consistently being harmed and killed by the archaic structure. During the summer months, Trout Creek has the highest water temperature of any major tributary to the Wind River and consistently exceeds state water quality standards to a degree that is lethal to threatened steelhead. Clark-Skamania Flyfisher's Craig Lynch is ecstatic about the promise the project holds for fish recovery, "Trout Creek historically produced 40% of the Wind River's wild steelhead populations. By removing Hemlock Dam we will restore access to prime habitat for these fish."

To remove the dam, the Forest Service applied to the Washington Department of Ecology for a section 401 certification that the project would comply with the Clean Water Act and protect water quality standards. On June 17, 2008 the Department of Ecology issued a Water Quality Certification to the Forest Service approving its action to remove Hemlock Dam. Skamania County appealed the Department of Ecology's certification in an attempt to stop the project. The Gifford Pinchot Task Force intervened in the case and worked with Clark-Skamania Flyfishers, American Whitewater and American

Rivers to present the case for the removal of Hemlock Dam. Staff Attorney Ralph Bloemers, with the Crag Law Center, filed intervention papers supporting the Forest Service proposal and the Washington Department of Ecology's certification. Ralph Bloemers stated: "The Forest Service can now move forward with its plan to remove Hemlock Dam and improve water quality and habitat for wild fish in lower Trout Creek. The Forest Service has taken a careful approach to restoring 13 miles of steelhead habitat provided by Trout Creek and its tributaries. This project demonstrates that recreation clubs, conservation groups and local citizens can work together with the Forest Service to accomplish great things for our environment."

To support the dam removal project, American Whitewater worked collaboratively with the Gifford Pinchot Task Force and the Forest Service on this proposal to restore the Wind River. Thomas O'Keefe, Stewardship Director with American Whitewater, is thrilled that the project is moving forward: "Rather than investing millions in failed fish recovery efforts, the best thing we can do is remove old, useless dams that block our free-flowing rivers. Nature is a cheap hired hand and by removing this dam we will recover key habitat for native fish and return the Wind River to its natural free flowing condition."

River Facts:

- Many of Washington's rivers are impacted by dams: WA DOE Dam safety office regulates over 1000 dams greater than 10 acre feet <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/PROGRAMS/wr/dams/dss.html>
- Less than 18% of North American Rivers are free-flowing (source WWF)
- Of the 3.5 million miles of rivers in the US approximately 600,000 miles are impounded behind dams (source NPS) or 17% of our nation's river miles.

National Park Service - Bibliography: Economic Benefits of Conserved Rivers
<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Document/view/documentid/512>

Dam Removal: Economic Issues
http://www.americanrivers.org/site/DocServer/report_economic_issues.pdf?docID=745

American Whitewater's Pacific Northwest Dam Removal Fact Sheet
http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Document_view_documentid_119

Portland Regional Demand for Whitewater
http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Document_view_documentid_162

Economic Study on the Rogue River
http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/Document_view_documentid_513