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## *Upper Columbia Native Fish Alliance*

Suggested Stewardship Strategies for the Upper Columbia American Reach:  
Proposal for a Native Salmonid Stewardship Segment:

We believe, in light of the existing potential for a quality native salmonid fishery developing on the American Reach section of the upper Columbia River above Lake Roosevelt (that portion of the river between China Bend and the U.S.-Canada border, about a 15-mile segment) and a corresponding fishery emerging on the Canadian Reach to Keenleyside Dam, the time has come to recognize the economic and biological value of stewarding this segment of the Columbia as a native salmonid fishery that might be subject to a stewardship policy separate from that of Lake Roosevelt. We see the American and Canadian Reach segments as possessing a bio-system more intact than the lacustrine environment of L.R. below the Little Dalles, and more closely resembling the original flow prior to the dams.

It is known that the American Reach-Canadian Reach mainstem and tributaries host naturally reproducing salmonids still possessing the native genome. Efforts toward spawning-creek enhancement on the Canadian Reach are showing good results and much evidence of the viability of a self-sustaining native trout fishery for the upper Columbia. We think that a reasonable stewardship plan might do much to ensure the continuance of native salmonids in the American Reach and help bring this emerging native fishery toward full potential. Considering the results of fishery agency studies, and the anecdotal knowledge of our supporter-users, which represents, all told, hundreds of hours per year on this segment of river, we suggest the following changes to existing regulations:

~ Regard the American Reach segment of the Columbia River between China Bend and the U.S.-Canada border as a unique stewardship unit, regulated as a Native Fish Stewardship Segment.

~ Increase the allowed take-limits of walleye and smallmouth bass within the American Reach segment. Additionally, we suggest the dismissal of minimum length or slot-size restrictions regarding walleye and smallmouth bass in this same segment. We suggest that the Native Fish Stewardship Segment include enough of the China Bend section to allow harvest of walleye and smallmouth bass staging at the Little Dalles outflow area. Our interpretation of the science, backed by our personal observations lead us to believe beyond a reasonable doubt that any efforts to restore the native fishery in the American Reach are greatly diminished, or impossible, given present walleye numbers and an increasing number of smallmouth bass as well. Biologists have estimated that up to 73% of native fish spawned in the Reach are eaten by walleye. We think reducing predation to around 50% is a reasonable and achievable short-term goal, and that this may be facilitated with an increased allowance of take for non-native predators.

~ We suggest reducing the current daily possession limit of rainbow and cutthroat trout to: two fish, any size, but not more than one over 20 inches. No-take for bull trout. No-take for kokanee possessing an adipose fin. General statewide limits could apply to non-native salmonids like brook and brown trout. (These are a very rare catch on the Reach.)

~ Based on what we're seeing, we're not sure we recognize any tangible benefit to the recent A to B winter-spring closure of the Columbia mainstem in the Northport area – certainly no benefit to the fishery quantifiable enough to offset the loss of revenue to local commerce resulting from the closure. If there is reason for real concern regarding undue pressure on pre-spawn fish in the mainstem, we're just not seeing it with present fishing pressure. By far, anymore, the greatest number of people fishing during the closure period are catch and release fly fishermen who have minimum impact on the fishery, and, this same group, providing the greatest source of income to local services ancillary to fishing and tourism. (Pre-spawn trout staging in the river main-stem are in peak shape during the closure period, and are actually in better condition to survive catch and release than in the immediate post-spawn period. We suggest removing the A to B mainstem closure, and retaining sufficient creek-mouth closure distances for Onion Creek, Sheep Creek and Deep Creek. We think creek-mouth closures during the spawning period, alone, are sufficient to prevent undue pressure, considering the low numbers of fishermen during the period. In our view,

any of the suggestions listed within this document would serve the native fishery better than a seasonal area closure on the Columbia main-stem, and indeed, do more than ameliorate any perceived negative effects on native fish resulting from lifting the closure, and with no disruption to local business.

~ We suggest that Onion Creek, Sheep Creek and Deep Creek, from their confluence with the Columbia to their respective first-barrier falls, be subject to the same general seasons as present, but be subject to a one-trout daily possession limit on cutthroat and rainbow trout, no-take on kokanee; with gear restricted to a single, barbless artificial only. We think this would do much to increase the numbers of native trout and kokanee known to be spawning in these creeks to the barrier falls.

We hope you will consider our proposal for a Native Fish Stewardship Segment for the upper Columbia. We think the above amendments could get us down the road toward bringing a healthy, self-sustaining native fishery, and the corresponding benefits of such a fishery, into reality. Thank you.

The undersigned are businesses and individuals who endorse the UCNFA proposal for a Native Fish Stewardship Segment and/or changes in present regulations that might bring about the enhancement and preservation of native fish stocks in the American Reach segment of the upper Columbia.

SIGNED: