

August xx, 2009Date

The Honorable David R. Obey, Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn Building

Representative Obey:

The fish and wildlife agencies and Tribes of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority (CBFWA)¹ strongly support the appropriation of \$25 million for full Fiscal Year 2010 funding of the Fisheries Restoration and Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA), as authorized in the recently passed H.R. 146. The members of CBFWA are legally recognized managers of the fish and wildlife resources of the Columbia River Basin, and include four state and two federal fish and wildlife management entities and eleven Indian Tribes.

FRIMA was originally enacted in 2000 to create a program that focuses on screening and passage improvements at water diversions where both fish and irrigated agriculture are important economic and social resources. Fish screens and fishways provide an immediate benefit to fishery resources while maintaining the supply of water valued by agricultural and other users. Screens effectively prevent the loss of millions of fish and other aquatic species annually in the four states considered by FRIMA (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana). Providing fish passage at diversion dams instantly opens up additional habitat for spawning and rearing by local fish populations. Projects implemented through the FRIMA program continue to help support sustainable fisheries and sustainable agricultural practices.

Since funding for FRIMA began in 2002, 106 projects have been completed with a total FRIMA contribution of over 9 million dollars and a non-federal partner match of over 11 million dollars. FRIMA legislation required a local partner cost-share of at least 35%; however, partner cost share has averaged over 56% for all projects approved. This large investment by applicants and other partners has allowed the limited funding available to be distributed to additional projects and has increased the project ownership by local water users.

¹ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service did not participate in the development of this letter, and have abstained.

The CBFWA requests your support in obtaining the full allocation of funds to FRIMA, allowing water users in the Columbia River Basin to continue to implement fish screening and passage projects for the benefit of fish and agriculture.

Sincerely,

Elmer Ward, Chairman
Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority

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