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## LAWSUIT FILED TO FORCE EPA ADMINISTRATOR SCOTT PRUITT TO ACT ON HEAT-DRIVEN SALMON KILLS

### ***Groups Filed the First Lawsuit Against Scott Pruitt as EPA Administrator to Force Him to Protect Salmon from Hot Water and Climate Change***

**February 23, 2017 (Seattle, WA)** — Columbia Riverkeeper, Snake River Waterkeeper, Idaho Rivers United, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, and the Institute for Fisheries Resources filed suit (available here: [http://bit.ly/FILED\\_TMDL\\_Complaint](http://bit.ly/FILED_TMDL_Complaint)) under the Clean Water Act to compel the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to create a temperature pollution budget, also known as a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), for the Columbia and Snake rivers in Oregon and Washington.

Scott Pruitt, President Trump's newly confirmed EPA Administrator, has questioned the need to fight climate change. This lawsuit would compel EPA to write a TMDL—a plan to keep the rivers cool enough for salmon and steelhead in the face of global warming. This is the nation's first lawsuit against EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt listed as defendant in his official capacity.

Dams on the Columbia and Snake create large, slow-moving reservoirs that cause high water temperatures. Warm summer water temperatures pose increasingly severe threats to salmon and steelhead. In 2015, warm water killed roughly 250,000 adult sockeye salmon migrating up the rivers. In response to the 2015 fish kills, EPA stated that “the need to lower water temperatures becomes more critical as the Pacific Northwest Region continues to address...climate change.”

#### **Quotes and Contacts:**

- *“We need a plan to deal with climate change and rising water temperatures in the Columbia, or we may be telling our kids stories about salmon instead of teaching them to fish,” said Brett VandenHeuvel, Executive Director of Columbia Riverkeeper. (Brett VandenHeuvel, 503.348.2436, [bv@columbiariverkeeper.org](mailto:bv@columbiariverkeeper.org))*
- *“Water temperatures in the Columbia mean life or death to salmon. Our members’ livelihoods depend on healthy salmon runs,” said Glen Spain, Northwest Regional Director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations and the Institute for Fisheries Resources. “It’s simply unacceptable to let hot water kill otherwise-healthy adult salmon before they can spawn.” (Glen H. Spain, 541.521.8655, [fish1ifr@aol.com](mailto:fish1ifr@aol.com))*
- *“Salmon and steelhead cannot be allowed to slide further toward extinction because of known increases in water temperatures” said Buck Ryan, Executive Director of Snake River Waterkeeper. “Instead of hoping rivers don’t get hot enough each year to kill hundreds of thousands of fish like in 2015, we’re demanding that agencies make a plan to lower temperatures so endangered populations can spawn and recover.” (Buck Ryan, 208.806.1303, [buck@snakeriverwaterkeeper.org](mailto:buck@snakeriverwaterkeeper.org))*
- *“The hot water tragedy of 2015 was, unfortunately, a predictable disaster,” said Idaho Rivers United Executive Director Kevin Lewis. “For too long, federal agencies have sat on their hands while our region’s signature species suffered. We asked the EPA to address this issue last August, but the agency came up short. We can’t stand by and allow our salmon to land in hot water again.” (Kevin Lewis, 208.343.7481, [kevin@idahorivers.org](mailto:kevin@idahorivers.org))*

*Plaintiffs are represented by Bryan Hurlbutt, an attorney at Advocates for the West ([advocateswest.org](http://advocateswest.org)), a public interest nonprofit environmental law firm based in Boise, Idaho. Plaintiffs are also represented by Richard Smith, attorney at Smith and Lowney PLLC in Seattle.*