

BPA is Terminating Funding for the Columbia River SAFE Program

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) announced on June 18 that it will stop funding the Select Area Fisheries Enhancement (SAFE) Program in the Lower Columbia River, effective September 30.

SAFE is a cornerstone hatchery program that provides terminal, ocean, and mainstem harvest opportunities, supports living-wage jobs in coastal communities, provides forage for southern resident killer whales, and reduces pressure on vulnerable Columbia River stocks.

This decision-- to end a program that has provided fishing opportunities for more than 30 years-- comes with minimal notice and results in an estimated \$2.3 million funding shortfall shared by ODFW, WDFW, and Clatsop County. There is no viable short-term replacement for the withdrawn BPA funds.

Over 7 million salmon currently in hatchery facilities now face uncertainty, including spring Chinook and coho. Without BPA funding, ODFW will be forced to close Gnat Creek Hatchery and lose 8 FTE across the region. Oregon will lose tens of millions of dollars in economic activity and harvest opportunity for thousands of commercial and recreational fishermen in future years.

The Select Area Fisheries Enhancement Program

SAFE is part of the mitigation package to address the impacts of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and fisheries. The building and operation of the hydropower system is a primary reason that Columbia Basin fish stocks are fractions of what they once were.

The SAFE program has been funded annually by BPA for more than 30 years to produce fish to mitigate for lost fishing opportunities and seeks to also:

- limit indirect impacts on ESA-listed salmon by moving commercial fishing pressure out of the mainstem Columbia River to allow ESA-listed salmon to pass through
- minimizes straying and maximize harvest by planning for every SAFE-produced fish to be harvested
- implement conservation efforts related to hatchery and harvest reforms in the lower Columbia



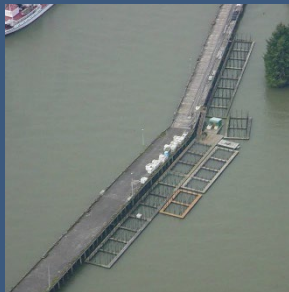
On the south side of the Columbia River, ODFW and Clatsop County operate SAFE facilities at Youngs Bay, Tongue Point, South Channel, Blind Slough and Knappa Slough where hatcheries and netpens rear young salmon that go to ocean after they are released. Adult fish return to these locations to be harvested.

Off-channel commercial fisheries for SAFE-produced salmon are the most reliable and productive opportunities anywhere in the Lower Columbia River, yielding millions of dollars in local economic impact just last year. Sport anglers also enjoy the opportunity to catch more than a third of all SAFE-produced salmon, primarily in the ocean and lower river.

The SAFE Program is a critical part of Columbia River fisheries management.

- SAFE shifts commercial fishery pressure away from the mainstem Columbia River, protecting weak and ESA-listed stocks.
- Since 2017, SAFE fisheries have accounted for 99% of spring Chinook and 90% of coho harvested in non-Treaty Lower Columbia commercial fisheries.
- The program supports year-round sport and commercial fisheries that are carefully managed to remain below ESA impact limits while optimizing their economic return.
- SAFE fish provide forage for endangered southern resident killer whales, bolster living-wage jobs in coastal communities, and maintain sustainable harvests.

This abrupt decision by BPA poses immediate risks to both commercial and recreational fisheries that depend on predictable, sustainable salmon returns. It jeopardizes local economies and eliminates the conservation benefits this program provides.



Key Takeaways

-  Local anglers and the commercial fishing industry rely on SAFE-produced salmon for their livelihoods and recreation.
-  More than 7 million hatchery salmon currently in production will never reach terminal fisheries and entire fisheries will be gone in future years. In the long-term, this will likely result in closing a hatchery and permanent loss of hatchery salmon for harvest across the Lower Columbia.
-  NMFS recently updated the Biological Opinion for SAFE—a process that reaffirmed its conservation and fishery-management value and underscored the program's continued alignment with regional biological priorities.
-  The Northwest Power and Conservation Council, which advises on mitigation investments, has repeatedly recommended SAFE for continued funding. The Council's support underscores that SAFE remains aligned with long-standing regional mitigation commitments.

Urge BPA to restore funding for SAFE

Call 800-622-4519 or email

BPA decision-makers:

Travis Kavulla, Administrator & CEO (trkavulla@bpa.gov)

Suzanne Cooper, Deputy Admin. and COO (sbcooper@bpa.gov)

Ben Zelinsky, Acting Exec. VP: Env., Fish and Wildlife (bdzelinsky@bpa.gov)

Jason Sweet, Exec. Manager, Fish and Wildlife Program (jcsweet@bpa.gov)

ODFW Contact: John North (John.A.NORTH@odfw.oregon.gov)



**Oregon Department
of Fish and Wildlife**