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**Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Committee**

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**HJM 4014**

**Brief Description:** Concerning the reintroduction of salmon and steelhead above blocked areas of the Columbia river.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Stanford, Blake, Van De Wege, Pettigrew, Ryu, Lytton and Pollet.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requests that the federal government and the entities representing the Northwest region pursue the reintroduction of salmon and steelhead in the reaches of the Columbia River upstream of the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams using a pragmatic and science-based approach that features careful and coordinated planning, research, testing, and construction followed by monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management.

**Hearing Date:** 2/2/16

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

**Background:**

Fish Passage on the Columbia River.

The portion of the Columbia River from Cape Disappointment to the Canadian border features 11 dams managed by a variety of owners that are engineered to provide multiple benefits. From the mouth to the Canadian border, these dams are the Bonneville Dam, the Dallas Dam, John Day Dam, McNary Dam, Priest Rapids Dam, Wanapum Dam, Rock Island Dam, Rocky Reach Dam, Wells Dam, Chief Joseph Dam, and the Grand Coulee Dam. Of those dams, all provide some amount of salmonid fish passage other than the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams.

Columbia River Treaty Recommendations.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The Columbia River Treaty (CRT) is an international agreement between Canada and the United States that provides for joint development, regulation, and management of the Columbia River in order to coordinate flood control and optimize electrical energy production on both sides of the border. The CRT has no official expiration date, but meets its maximum length in September of 2024. At that time, either country can ask to renegotiate the CRT or terminate it entirely.

Decisions regarding the CRT will ultimately be made by the United States Department of State. However, in the lead up to the 2024 date, a group known as the "U.S. Entity" was charged with developing regional recommendations regarding the CRT's continuation or modification. The U.S. Entity, which is led by the Administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration and the Northwestern Division Engineer of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, were charged with undertaking a series of studies regarding current and potential future operations under the CRT.

The formal recommendation of the U.S. Entity was released in December of 2013 and includes a regional goal of developing a modernized framework for the CRT that ensures a resilient and healthy ecosystem-based function while maintaining an acceptable level of flood risk and assuring reliable and economic hydropower.

#### Northwest Power and Conservation Council Fish and Wildlife Program.

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) is a congressionally created coordinated, region-wide power planning interstate compact agency representing Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The NPCC develops and maintains in 5-year increments, a 20-year electric power plan for the Pacific Northwest. The NPCC also maintains a fish and wildlife program that coordinates mitigation from the impacts of hydropower dams on fish and wildlife.

The most recent fish and wildlife program update was released in 2014. This update included the pursuit of fish reintroduction above the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. The NPCC recommends a science-based, phased approach to investigating how reintroduction could be achieved. The first phase of the recommended approach is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2016 and will evaluate information from passage studies at other blockages and from previous assessments of the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

The Legislature requests that the federal government and the entities representing the Northwest region pursue the reintroduction of salmon and steelhead in the reaches of the Columbia River upstream of the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. The request is for the reintroduction to be pursued through a pragmatic and science-based approach that can lead to a fish passage and reintroduction plan that features careful and coordinated planning, research, testing, and construction followed by monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management.

One example of a plan that meets the requested process and outcomes is the plan proposed by the NPCC.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.