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**ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP PROMISES LAWSUIT OVER
EPA FAILURE TO ISSUE STANDARDS FOR OREGON TOXICS**

Environmentalists informed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today to expect a lawsuit in 60 days due to its failure to ensure Oregon has standards to protect threatened and endangered salmon from toxic chemicals. The Portland, OR-based Northwest Environmental Advocates (NWEA) informed EPA that it would sue to force the agency to adopt limits for four toxic pollutants that a federal fishery agency determined jeopardize threatened and endangered salmon at current allowable levels.

“Everything the State of Oregon does to carry out its responsibilities under the Clean Water Act moves at a glacial pace and the federal agencies must be sued on everything to get them to put one foot in front of the other, as the law requires,” explained NWEA Executive Director Nina Bell. “These water quality standards are now 25 years old. Oregon’s forest practices are in the dark ages. Only a tiny trickle of water pollution discharge permits are being renewed. Oregon taxpayers and the environment deserve better.”

The pollutants are copper, cadmium, aluminum, and ammonia. Copper causes salmon to lose their sense of smell, which is key to their ability to return to spawning habitats. Copper is widely present in sewage discharges, stormwater, and agricultural chemicals.

Oregon last updated its water quality standards for aquatic life protection for these pollutants in 2004, after which NWEA sued EPA for failing to act on them and failing to seek the legally-required advice of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). NWEA also sued NMFS for failing to complete the required consultation with EPA. The result of these lawsuits was EPA’s 2013 disapproval of Oregon’s water quality standards on these and other chemicals.

NWEA is represented by Jamie Saul and Allison LaPlante of the Earthrise Law Center at Lewis and Clark Law School.

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