

LAWSUIT TARGETS COLD-WATER REFUGES TO SAVE COLUMBIA RIVER SALMON FROM HIGH TEMPERATURES

The Columbia River is home to salmon species that are being pushed to extinction by unsafe water temperatures. Salmon and steelhead migrating through these lethal temperatures are forced to turn to a series of cold water refuges to gain relief from the deadly heat. Each of these refuges is created by tributary rivers—such as the Deschutes, Sandy, and Hood Rivers in Oregon, and the Lewis and White Salmon Rivers in Washington. But with declining stream flows and climate change, soon these tributaries, and the cold-water refuges they create, will be too warm to protect salmon. And there are no refuges upstream of Oregon's Deschutes River.

This year NWEA engaged two experts to show the federal court in our lawsuit that EPA's plan to protect cold-water refuges by relying exclusively on dozens of older plans—some decades old—will not lead to any improvements. Contrary to EPA's wishful thinking, there is no magic dust conferred on these ineffective plans just because EPA cited to them in its own plan.

NWEA's lawsuit against EPA and the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) seeks to bring real-life cold-water refuges to migrating salmon, not just the agencies' paper plans.

NWEA is represented in this case by Allison LaPlante at the Center for Biological Diversity; Lydia Dexter at Cultural Heritage Partners; Zach Nacev at Earthrise Law Center; and Bryan Telegin of Telegin Law. Thanks to experts Bob Baumgartner and Dr. Chris Frissell.