**Puyallup River named among America’s Most Endangered Rivers of 2020**

*Outdated hydropower facility threatens endangered salmon and steelhead*

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Washington, D.C. – American Rivers named the Puyallup River among *America’s Most Endangered Rivers®*, citing the threat that a century-old hydropower dam project poses to endangered fish. American Rivers and its partners called on the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the fishing rights of the Puyallup and Muckleshoot tribes, enforce the Endangered Species Act, and correct all fish-killing aspects of the Electron Hydro Project.

“The America’s Most Endangered Rivers report is a call to action for the future of rivers like the Puyallup,” said Wendy McDermott with American Rivers. “We all know the Electron Hydro Project is killing fish, and we know why. Now it’s time for the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to use their authority to fix it.”

Chinook salmon, a main source of food for endangered Souther Resident orcas, are threatened by the Electron Hydro Project, a hydropower facility constructed at the foot of Mount Ranier in 1904. The dam predates federal energy regulations and has insufficient fish passage. Adult salmon are restricted from accessing their spawning habitat upriver and juvinille salmon are drawn into a holding pond, where they drop 873 vertical feet into the powerhouse and turbines.

“To feed [Southern Resident] orcas, we need bold action on salmon recovery now. Improving fish passage at the Electron Hydro Dam is crucial for salmon survival in the Puyallup River and in Puget Sound,” stated Laura Blackmore with the Puget Sound Partnership.

American Rivers and its partners called on the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to use their authorities under the Endangered Species Act and demand expedited correction of all causes of federally protected fish mortality associated with the Electron Hydro Project. A Habitat Conservation Plan has been discussed and under devlopement for at least 12 years. It is long past time for the project to become compliant with the law.

“While hydropower is an important part of the Northwest’s energy portfolio, it can have major impacts on rivers and fish. Unfortunately, the workings of Electron dam and related facilities is having tremendous negative effects on native fish. Correcting these impacts could yield significant benefits to salmon, steelhead and bull trout recovery,” said McDermott.

The Puyallup River’s glacially fed waters and the many species of fish and wildlife that rely on the river provide critical resources for the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and local communities. Chinook salmon are the keystone species, supporting an entire web of life that includes Southern Resident orcas in Puget Sound and beyond. Chinook salmon are in steep decline as are wild steelhead and bull trout. All three of these native fish species are protected as threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

The annual *America’s Most Endangered Rivers* report is a list of rivers at a crossroads, where key decisions in the coming months will determine the rivers’ fates. Over the years, the report has helped spur many successes including the removal of outdated dams, the protection of rivers with Wild and Scenic designations, and the prevention of harmful development and pollution.

Other rivers in the region listed as most endangered in past years include the Green-Duwamish River (2015 and 2019), Willamette River (2019), South Fork Skykomish and Green-Toutle rivers (2017), and the White River (2014).

**AMERICA’S MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS® OF 2020**

**#1 Upper Mississippi River** (Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin)

**Threat:** Climate change, poor flood management

**#2 Lower Missouri River** (Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas)

**Threat:** Climate change, poor flood management

**#3 Big Sunflower River** (Mississippi)

**Threat:** Yazoo pumps project

**#4: Puyallup River** (Washington)

**Threat:** Electron Dam

**#5: South Fork Salmon River** (Idaho)

**Threat:** Gold mine

**#6: Menominee River** (Michigan, Wisconsin)

**Threat:** Open pit sulfide mining

**#7: Rapid Creek** (South Dakota)

**Threat:** Gold mining

**#8: Okefenokee Swamp** (Georgia, Florida)

**Threat:** Titanium mining

**#9: Ocklawaha River** (Florida)

**Threat:** Rodman Dam

**#10: Lower Youghiogheny River** (Pennsylvania)

**Threat:** Natural gas development

**River of the Year: Delaware River** (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Maryland)

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