**Media release**

**BC must work with US to remove defunct dam that blocks salmon access to entire Similkameen River**

**Obsolete unused dam south of Osoyoos blocks access for salmon to more than 500 kilometers of prime river habitat – its removal would have immense environmental benefit for both BC and Washington**

 ***For immediate release***

Vancouver, BC, November 16, 2020: The Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia says that removing a defunct dam south of Osoyoos and just across the US border, which hasn’t generated electricity for more than fifty years, would be vital in restoring salmon stocks in the Similkameen River and its tributaries.

The Similkameen River starts east of Manning Provincial Park and flows freely past Princeton, Hedley, Keremeos and Cawston before crossing into the US where, near the town of Oroville, the river reaches the Enloe Dam, an 18-meter concrete wall.

The dam was constructed in 1920 but was never equipped with fish ladders to enable the migration of salmon. The dam subsequently eliminated salmon and steelhead runs from the Similkameen River and its tributaries in the US, and especially in BC.

The Outdoor Recreation Council of BC (ORC) and its River Chair, Mark Angelo, have long been advocates for removing old dams that have outlived their usefulness but continue to have adverse environmental and recreational impacts.

The Enloe Dam hasn’t produced hydropower since 1954 and provides no benefits for irrigation or flood control purposes. New efforts are underway in Washington to determine the feasibility and costs associated with the removal of the Enloe Dam, which would open up more than 500 kilometers of prime salmon habitat in BC and the US.

Mark Angelo, River Chair for the Outdoor Recreation Council, and an Order of Canada recipient, said, “Given the pressures confronting salmon and the deteriorating state of many runs throughout the Pacific Northwest, removing this dam creates a significant opportunity to help reverse that trend. Few other single actions could generate this much benefit for salmon”.

The Outdoor Recreation Council of BC is asking the new BC government to have direct dialogue with the state of Washington and the US government regarding the importance of removing the dam and restoring its natural flow. The removal of this damaging structure also creates an excellent opportunity for both countries, including newly elected governments in BC and in the US, to work together towards improving the state of rivers and salmon in both BC and Washington.

Angelo says: “The removal of the old, non-operating Enloe Dam near the Canadian-US border would have huge environmental benefits for both BC and the state of Washington.” He adds, “Removing this dam would open up over 500 km of prime salmon habitat, much of it in BC.”

Both ORC and Angelo have been involved in many successful dam removal efforts. Most recently, Angelo collaborated with the Province in its successful efforts to remove seven outdated and non-operating dams in the Britannia Creek watershed [one of the attached images shows Angelo atop the Tunnel Dam on Britannia Creek during its removal. The ORC is hoping for a similar outcome with the Enloe Dam].

Angelo continues, “dams were never meant to last forever, and over time, they can outlive their usefulness and become susceptible to sediment infilling and concrete deterioration. Many dilapidated dam structures can also eventually become threats to public safety”. He added, “The removal of the Enloe Dam is a major untapped opportunity for improving salmon habitat in BC’s southern interior”.

Rod Clapton, British Columbia Federation of Drift Fishers, says: “With the on-going loss of angling opportunity province-wide, any potential for reintroduction of a species and creation of future fisheries is viewed as very significant positive by the public fishery.”

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**For more information, please contact:**

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**Images:**

* [Image 1](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WXQu0O7fBX0CqRkhBJDhF-7TP43YdcMG/view?usp=sharing): The defunct 100-year-old Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River in Washington blocks access by salmon and steelhead to over 500 kilometres of high-quality river habitat, much of it in British Columbia. Image credit by Alex Maier.
* [Image 2](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WZNqPX5DwuEvqnvoEYQub-tYaxxmmQtp/view?usp=sharing): Mark Angelo of the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC sits atop an old dam in the process of being removed on BC’s Britannia Creek. The Council is hoping the non-functioning Enloe dam in Washington will be similarly removed opening up an immense amount of salmon habitat in both Washington and BC. Image credit by Mark Angelo.

**Key facts:**

* The Enloe dam was built in 1920 without fish passage or fish ladders. It eliminated salmon runs throughout BC’s Similkameen River and its tributaries such as the Ashnola and Tulameen. The dam blocks 328 miles (527 km) of salmon habitat, in both the US and Canada.
* The dam is managed by the Okanogan Public Utility District but hasn’t produced power since 1958. Removing the Enloe Dam is one of the greatest river and salmon reclamation opportunities in the upper Columbia River and with restored access, could accommodate large numbers of chinook and steelhead.
* The cost to reenergize the power plant is not viable. To reenergize the plant alone would cost US$87 million – and the cost of electricity would be 10 times higher than other power production cost on the Columbia.
* Chinook has been filmed jumping at the face of the dam – which is enticing to dam removal advocates.
* Past dam removals have been extremely rewarding elsewhere. Both BC and Washington have been leaders in recent years. Examples include the Elwha River – with the removal of the Glines and Elwha dams, the Elwha has now become a river reborn. The Nooksack River near Bellingham is another example where the removal of an 8-meter high diversion dam has restored 24 km of chinook habitat. BC examples include the Coursier Dam near Revelstoke and 7 recently removed dams on Britannia creek
* Enloe dam not a behemoth like the much larger Elwha dams – it’s considered to be medium size dam – 54 feet (or 18 meters) high, and 290 feet (88 meters) wide – so its decommissioning and removal is very viable.

**About the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC (ORC):**

The ORC is an umbrella organization composed of organizational members that represent the broad and diverse spectrum of outdoor recreation user groups in BC, including paddlers, hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, quad riders, 4WDs, sport fishers and nature interests. We work to promote and advocate for access to and responsible use of BC's outdoors for public recreation, build bridges between outdoor recreation groups and represent the broad interests of the outdoor recreation community to government and industry. We indirectly represent more than 100,000 British Columbians. Learn more at [www.orcbc.ca](http://www.orcbc.ca).