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Contact:

Mark Trenholm, Wild Salmon Center, 503-312-9255

Janeen Heath, Office of Senator Maria Cantwell, 202-224-8277

West Coast Senators Introduce Bill to Conserve Salmon Strongholds

Washington, D.C.—Today, Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and the entire West Coast Senate delegation introduced federal legislation to conserve the healthiest remaining wild Pacific salmon ecosystems in North America—“Salmon Strongholds.” A similar version of the bill was reported favorably out of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation last year, and included in a natural resources omnibus package, which failed to pass in the final days of the 111th Congress. The bill is tentatively scheduled for mark up in the Commerce Committee in early August.

“Salmon continue to be a vital part of our communities, generating over a billion dollars in economic activity and thousands of jobs in Washington state,” said Senator Cantwell. “Salmon serve as an iconic symbol of the Northwest’s natural beauty and for generations have been an integral part of our lives. The many challenges to sustaining wild Pacific salmon stocks require us to make strategic investments now to ensure they remain at the core of our region’s prosperity.”

The Pacific Salmon Stronghold Conservation Act will establish a new, proactive U.S. policy that recognizes the need for conservation of salmon strongholds as a complement to ongoing efforts to recover federally-listed salmon populations. The legislation aims to get ahead of continued salmon declines by supporting the protection and, if necessary, the restoration of ecosystem processes within currently healthy salmon-bearing watersheds.

“Without a more comprehensive approach to salmon conservation, we run the risk of losing our last remaining viable populations and healthiest watersheds to the same threats that have led to declines elsewhere,” said Guido Rahr, President and Chief Executive of Wild Salmon Center. “This represents a fundamental flaw in federal salmon conservation policy, which this bill remedies.”

The Stronghold Act recognizes that the only way to maintain our remaining strong populations is to promote and invest in new management approaches rooted in preventing recurrence of the mistakes of the past, while recognizing threats on the horizon. The bill will address some of the root causes of salmon decline by focusing resources on strategies that promote the development and implementation of prevention-based strategies both within and across salmon strongholds.

By investing in the conservation of healthy salmon watersheds, the Pacific Salmon Stronghold Conservation Act will also support green jobs and infrastructure, sustaining thousands of livelihoods that depend on fishing, tourism, recreation, and watershed restoration.

Find links to legislation, supporters, maps, and additional background documents here:

http://www.wildsalmoncenter.org/programs/north_america/strongholds.php#Leg