

# Tired of all those salmon?



## Then vote for Gordon \$mith



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# When it comes to conservation, Gordon Smith's D.C. votes don't match his Oregon quotes.

**G**ordon Smith played politics during the 2001 drought by subverting conservation laws, killing endangered salmon, simply to win re-election. In order to secure rural southern-Oregon votes in his last election, Smith and the Bush administration over-rode water level policies and violated the Endangered Species Act (ESA), in order to appease agricultural interests for political gain.

Forgoing proposed solutions which could have avoided the crisis by adopting plans which buy up land from farmers willing to sell and subsidizing area farms impacted by the drought. This would have protected farms, salmon runs and the fishing industry. Instead Karl Rove and Gordon Smith looked at opinion polls and overturned the science. The result...?

## *The largest fish-kill in the region's history!*



### **Background**

The arid Klamath Basin in 2001 experienced a severe drought due to the low snow fall the previous winter. Based on the science, and in order to protect several endangered species of

fish including the threatened coho salmon, water usually drained off from the Klamath river system and sent to farms was halted in April of 2001. This was based on the recommendation of biologists at the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The resulting anger by irrigators, and farmers was directed towards federal agencies with responsibility for water and species management. At one point the farmers protested by illegally opening the head gates to obtain restricted water for irrigation.

### **Fishing for Votes**

The Bush administration, seeking to exploit the dispute between the farmers and the conservation scientists, and in order to erode the ESA which has long been a target of right-wing activists, issued a hasty crafted interim report to justify overruling the conclusions of the USFWS. This succeeded in creating the impression the fish did not need water and label inconvenient facts and evidence, "junk science".

Republican Senator Gordon Smith, faced a potentially difficult re-election challenge in Oregon, a state Bush had barely lost to Al Gore in 2000, by just 6,765 votes.

On Jan. 5 2002, Bush and his political manager Karl Rove flew to Oregon for an appearance in Portland with Smith. The president signaled his siding with the agricultural interests, instead of following the law and the science, saying "We'll do everything we can to make sure water is available for those who farm."

The next day Karl Rove visited the 50 Interior Department managers giving a PowerPoint presentation Rove uses when soliciting Republican donors,

and while possibly violating the law (the Hatch Act), he highlighted the Klamath water crisis and made clear that the administration was siding with irrigators and not the science.

Soon after that meeting, the White House moved to slash the river flow levels recommended by the biologists by more than 43 percent, a clear violation of the law (the ESA). On March 29, then Interior Secretary Gale Anne Norton stood with Gordon Smith in Klamath Falls and opened the irrigation-system head gates which diverted water from the river.

The rejection of science and the triumph of political pandering led to more 33,000 salmon dying along the lower Klamath River later that fall. The ecological disaster left one of the state's major rivers stacked with rotting salmon. It was the largest die-off of adult salmon ever recorded.

Scientists have confirmed that the fish-kill were a result of the policies of diverting water for the irrigators.

### **Aftermath**

By 2007 and with a change in control of Congress after the 2006 elections, investigations have begun into the political subversion of the law by the Bush administration at the behest of Gordon Smith.

The punch-line is that Smith recently touted his efforts to help Oregon fisherman because of a "government shutdown of fisheries". A "shutdown" caused by the fish-kill his actions brought about in the first place. The policies Gordon Smith pushed have left the industry decimated. His "help" for fisheries is like claiming credit for helping someone eliminate litter-box odor... by running over their cat.

**Find out more at:**



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