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Conservation Groups Win \$200,000 for Columbia River Protection in Chicken Waste Case.

Astoria, OR - The Northwest Environmental Defense Center (NEDC) and Columbia River Keeper have settled a lawsuit against the Point Adams Packing Company, a fish processing facility in Warrenton, Oregon, and California Spray Dry, a California rendering company. The suit charged that the companies were illegally dumping chicken waste into the Columbia River from Pt. Adams' Warrenton facility. In separate agreements, the two companies agreed to pay a combined \$200,000 toward habitat restoration and river protection efforts on the Columbia River to settle the suit. The companies stopped all chicken processing at the plant this summer after EPA investigators obtained a warrant and conducted a search at the facility based on information from NEDC and CRK.

"Our own sampling showed that *E. coli* levels in the discharge were off the charts, and the neighbors were getting physically ill from the facility's overpowering stench," says Mark Riskedahl, Executive Director for NEDC. "We are pleased that through our efforts and those of the U.S. EPA we were able to stop these discharges and enforce compliance with the Clean Water Act," says Mark Riskedahl, Executive Director for NEDC.

CRK President Peter Huhtula of Astoria agrees. "This is a good settlement because it will provide much needed funding to support habitat restoration and protection in the Columbia River basin and sends a clear message that our water protection alws need to be taken seriously."

Under the settlement agreements, \$80,000 will go toward habitat restoration, invasive weed removal, and other conservation measures in the Skipanon River. \$40,000 will be used to purchase Columbia River property near Vancouver that will be placed in a conservation easement to provide critical salmon spawning habitat. The remaining money will go to habitat protection, water quality monitoring, and other conservation measures in the Columbia River and Estuary.

"We're encouraged that the parties were able to reach an agreement and put their money to use on tangible restoration projects as opposed to just litigation," explains Melissa Powers with the Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center who represented NEDC in the case.

NEDC law clerk Chris Mixson and student volunteer Geoff Evans helped NEDC develop the case by tailing a truck carrying chicken waste to the facility from a poultry processing company in Kelso, Washington. Chris and Geoff also conducted surveillance of the facility and collected water quality samples that were integral to the successful resolution of the lawsuit.