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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Congressional Action Pushes to Reduce Toxics in the Columbia River Basin

Oregon's Senator Jeff Merkley and Representative Earl Blumenauer (OR-03) with co-sponsors Senator Ron Wyden, Representative Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01), and Representative Peter DeFazio (OR-04) reintroduced the Columbia River Basin Restoration Act on May 20, 2015. The Columbia River Basin Restoration Act of 2015 will authorize Congress to appropriate funds for voluntary toxics reduction actions by growers, tribes, foresters, soil and water conservation districts, nongovernment entities, and local and state governments.

"Thank you to our Congressional members for pushing to get recognition for the Columbia Basin and resources to reduce toxics," says Debrah Marriott, Executive Director of the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership. "We have a lot of science that shows the far-reaching negative impacts of toxics on drinking water, fish and wildlife, economic viability, and our health. What we need now is action and a paradigm shift. We need to use plain language to talk about how these contaminants impact us and give tangible examples of what we can do to eliminate them. There are great examples of people, companies, agencies, conservation organizations, and communities voluntarily making better choices, from green building, to green purchasing by the States of Oregon and Washington, to the brake pad industry, to companies choosing products with less toxics, to growers reducing use of pesticides. We just need a lot of more of these actions and the funds to implement them. The Columbia River Basin Restoration Act moves us on that path, and we are very grateful for the leadership of our Congressional members."

What toxics do:

- PCBs harm our immune systems and increase cancer risks.
- Mercury affects the developing brains of children and alters behavior and learning.
- Contaminants in flame-retardants, pharmaceuticals, and other chemicals of emerging concern are increasing forms of cancer, changing hormone balances, and causing neurological dysfunction in humans and other species. They cause male fish to morph to females during their life cycle and affect their ability to reproduce, avoid predators, and resist disease.

Since 2009, the Estuary Partnership has worked with members of Congress to bring attention to the Columbia River and toxics. Congressman Blumenauer and Senator Merkley have led the efforts, first introducing the bill in 2010 and again in 2014. A broad coalition of partners including tribes, ports, growers, and others from throughout the Basin are working for passage of the Columbia River Basin Restoration Act. The Columbia River Basin is the only major EPA designated 'large aquatic ecosystem' to receive zero funding pursuant to this designation. Since 2009, 'large aquatic ecosystems' including the Great Lakes and Puget Sound have received a total of over \$3 billion in funding to protect and preserve their watersheds. This Act will bring the Columbia River Basin in line with other 'large aquatic ecosystems.'

About the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership

The Estuary Partnership was established in 1995 by the Governors of Washington and Oregon and the US EPA to provide regional coordination, to advance science, and to get on-the-ground results in the lower Columbia River and estuary. It is a collaborative program led by farmers, educators, businesses and economic interests, conservation interests, community members, state governments, federal agencies, and tribal governments. The Estuary Partnership restores and protects habitat, improves water quality and reduces pollution, and provides information about the river to a range of audiences. The lower Columbia River and estuary is an "Estuary of National Significance," one of only 28 National Estuary Programs in the nation. The US EPA administers the National Estuary Program, created in the 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act. The Estuary Partnership is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. For more information, visit www.estuarypartnership.org.

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