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## Death Penalty A Maybe For Sea Lions

PORTLAND - A panel of experts has been named to consider the death penalty for California sea lions.

They are eating an increasing number of salmon as they swim over Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River.

NOAA Fisheries, the federal agency that oversees marine mammals and salmon, announced Thursday that 18 experts will meet early next month in Portland and have a recommendation within 60 days.

A final decision is expected by March.

The states of Washington, Idaho and Oregon made the recommendation because up to 50 sea lions a day have been gathering at the entrance to the Bonneville fish ladder in the spring. They dine on salmon, many of them threatened and endangered species.

Biologists estimate the sea lions ate 3,500 fish this year.

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