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Energy and conservation leaders call on elected officials to prioritize urgent Snake River issues

Letter calls for collaborative and durable solutions to address impacts of Columbia Basin federal dams

SEATTLE—In [a letter to the Governors of Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Montana](#), energy company and conservation community leaders called on elected officials across the Pacific Northwest to prioritize collaborative solutions to address the issues surrounding the Lower Snake River, including the long-term decline of salmon and steelhead populations.

Signed by 17 leaders of energy companies, utilities and conservation organizations from across the Pacific Northwest, the group stressed the need to find long-term and durable solutions that would:

- Recover abundant and harvestable salmon and steelhead populations
- Honor identity and cultural values as well as federal treaties and responsibilities for Columbia Basin tribes
- Enhance regional economies including farming, transportation, fishing, recreation, port and tribal enterprises in the Columbia Basin
- Ensure electric system reliability, affordability and decarbonization

The letter comes with the expected release of the Columbia River System Operation Draft Environmental Impact Statement, an extensive document that could provide a springboard for stakeholders and elected officials to help solve the complex challenges the Pacific Northwest currently faces.

“It is clear that there is an urgent need for the region and all of us whose wellbeing is tied to the Columbia and Snake Rivers to come together to identify the actions and investments needed to recover harvestable salmon and steelhead populations, conserve other fish and wildlife, honor and protect tribal needs and way of life, and strengthen the electricity and agricultural services that communities rely on,” the group wrote. “A well-designed regional strategic vision and plan that moves all interests forward together is the way these interconnected challenges will be solved.”

Representatives from the signed companies and organizations issued the following statements:

“This is an extremely complex challenge facing the stakeholders in the Pacific Northwest. I’m looking forward to the continued dialogue and looking for long-term durable solutions that meet all the shared goals developed by the group and outlined in the letter to the Northwest Governors.” **K. David Hagen, General Manager, Clearwater Power Company**

“It is encouraging that such a variety of stakeholders have started this dialog together. We are all blessed with the natural resources of the Pacific Northwest, including the Columbia and Snake Rivers, and we must work together to chart a path forward that provides the best long-term stewardship possible that meets our diverse interests, including environmental, social, and economic. I am honored to have been introduced to my fellow partners, who care so much about the Pacific Northwest and recognize the importance of the Columbia River. Developing a robust go-forward plan that meets everyone’s needs will be tough, but often the most challenging issues become the most rewarding opportunities. The importance of a successful outcome cannot be understated.” **Frank Lawson, General Manager, Eugene Water & Electric Board**

“Idaho Falls Power is committed to working collaboratively to better understand the needs of all stakeholders in our region to progress towards solutions that meet our diverse needs. I have appreciated the mutual respect and understanding this group of stakeholders has offered to each other and look forward to continuing progress.” **Bear Prairie, General Manager, Idaho Falls Power**

“The issues before us are complex but our mutual interests as a region are much greater than the issues that divide us. The time is now for us all to come together as a region to work collaboratively to restore fish, meet our energy needs and move progressively forward.” **Chad Jensen, CEO, Inland Power and Light**

“Our region’s salmon, steelhead, and orcas are going extinct, and with climate change, the challenges for the Northwest’s energy sector are equally urgent. Only by working together will we break the longstanding logjam over management of the Columbia River and Snake River federal dams. It’s time to stop fighting and to start asking what everybody needs.” **Giulia Good Stefani, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council**

“We're optimistic we can achieve a solution because, regardless of their perspective, people on all sides of this issue want the same outcomes—restored salmon populations; farms that are able to grow and get their crops to market; protection of the interests of tribes and communities; and clean, reliable, and affordable electricity. So, we agree on what we’re trying to accomplish. We just need to figure out how best to get there and that’s an inherently collaborative process.” **Nancy Hirsh, Executive Director, NW Energy Coalition**

“We believe the energy aspect of this issue can be addressed successfully because we have a variety of options that will assure continued access to clean, reliable, and affordable electricity. So, as we address other facets of the challenge, such as restoring salmon, meeting the needs of agriculture, and protecting the rights and interests of tribes and communities, we’re confident that the energy system can adapt as required.” **Wendy Gerlitz, Policy Director, NW Energy Coalition**

“Dams are part of our modern human landscape and they create benefits and costs. These benefits and costs are human, cultural, environmental, economic, carbon-free hydropower, agricultural, water supply, flood risk management and many other things. PNGC is committed to working with the diverse parties who have signed this letter and others to develop long-term solutions that work for people, planet and prosperity. We need our leaders in State, Federal and Tribal governments to help us if we are to be successful in this endeavor.” **Roger Gray, President and CEO, PNGC Power**

“Signatories of this letter represent a broad alliance of river interests committed to restoring abundant salmon and steelhead runs. We are hopeful that diverse interests throughout the PNW will unite around meaningful recovery efforts.” **David Doeringsfeld, General Manager, Port of Lewiston**

“Columbia/Snake salmon and steelhead and our Northwest communities and economy face a set of linked problems today. The commitment reflected in today's letter to work together urgently on solutions that can bring everyone forward together is a critical step. I look forward to working with others to both address the challenges and seize the opportunities.” **Joseph Bogaard, Executive Director, Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition**

“We are more powerful together despite our differences. The people of the Northwest region feel similarly about the value of our salmon, the importance of species recovery, and the challenge of balancing the environmental, economic and social impacts of how we manage the Columbia River hydropower system. It is our responsibility to join forces, to learn from each other, and to work through the issues to resolution.” **Debra Smith, General Manager/CEO, Seattle City Light**

“It is time to bring people and communities together to forge a solution that restores abundant salmon and steelhead and a healthy river, sustain strong communities and local economies, and assure our region continues to benefit from reliable clean energy. The right plan and investments can rebuild harvestable populations of fish and strong economies for the future. It's time for political leaders to support and help move this important process forward.” **Bill Arthur, Chair, Snake/Columbia River Salmon Campaign, Sierra Club**

“We are focused on finding a long-term outcome that will enhance fish recovery while maintaining the crucial benefits the Snake River dams bring to the region, including clean, affordable and reliable power our customers depend on. These are complex issues that go back generations, and I believe the only path to enduring solutions is through this collaboration. These partnerships are crucial to the region and show that we are all working toward a common goal.” **John Haarlow, General Manager and CEO, Snohomish County Public Utility District #1**

“With wild salmon and steelhead slipping closer to extinction, a rapidly changing energy market, and a warming climate, there is an urgent need for cooperation and leadership to find a path to a prosperous future for the Pacific Northwest. Working together we can identify the investments and actions needed to rebuild abundant salmon and steelhead, while also strengthening the region's economy and river-dependent communities. Trout Unlimited believes that with shared values and a commitment to problem-solving success is within reach.” **Rob Masonis, Vice President for Western Conservation, Trout Unlimited**

“For far too long this issue has been dominated by litigation and finger-pointing. It is time for the region to come together to craft creative and collaborative solutions that can protect and recover salmon and steelhead populations while maintaining clean, affordable and reliable electric power.” **Joe Lukas, General Manager, Western Montana G&T**

The full list of letter signers:

K David Hagen, General Manager	Clearwater Power Company
Frank Lawson, General Manager	Eugene Water & Electric Board
Mark Johnson, General Manager	Flathead Electric Cooperative
Bear Prairie, General Manager	Idaho Falls Power
Chad V. Jensen, CEO	Inland Power & Light
Giulia Good Stefani, Senior Attorney	Natural Resources Defense Council
Nancy Hirsh, Executive Director	NW Energy Coalition
Wendy Gerlitz, Policy Director	NW Energy Coalition

Roger Gray, President and CEO	PNGC Power
David Doeringsfeld, General Manager	Port of Lewiston
Joseph Bogaard, Executive Director	Save Our wild Salmon Coalition
Debra J. Smith, General Manger/CEO	Seattle City Light
Bill Arthur, Chair, Snake/Columbia River Salmon Campaign	Sierra Club
John Haarlow, General Manager	Snohomish County Public Utility District #1
Chris Robinson, General Manager & Superintendant	Tacoma Power
Rob Masonis, Vice President for Western Conservation	Trout Unlimited
Joe Lukas, General Manager	Western Montana Electric Generating & Transmission Cooperative

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