



## PRESS STATEMENT

**July 16, 2021**  
**Vancouver, WA**

### **State of Oregon's Motion for Court Injunction to Control Dam Operations Reflects Disjointed Energy Policies, Disregard for Consumer Energy Costs & Climate Concerns**

*Governor Brown's Actions Will Punish the Region's Electricity Customers*

The following press statement was issued today by Kurt Miller, executive director, Northwest RiverPartners.

**Key Quote:** "It is hard to imagine that Governor Brown would be complicit in purposely raising electricity rates for Oregonians while increasing our carbon footprint and reducing our ability to endure climate events. Oregon's motion would more than double the region's risk of blackouts when electricity is most needed to preserve lives during extreme weather events. With the region emerging from devastating pandemic losses and experiencing historic heat, drought, wildfires, rampant homelessness, and significant loss of life, we ask Governor Brown and the court to consider the full ramifications of Oregon's ill-advised motion."

**Background:** Today, the State of Oregon filed a motion for injunctive relief, asking the U.S. District Court in Portland, Oregon to take control of Columbia River System Operations. The motion calls for significantly increased spill at the federal hydroelectric dams on the lower Columbia and lower Snake rivers and lower reservoir levels on the lower Snake River.

If the court sides in Oregon's favor, electricity bills in the region could skyrocket because this action would waste 1300 average megawatts worth of electricity by spilling water over the top of dams rather than letting it generate energy by passing through turbines. One average megawatt is enough to power roughly 750 homes.

Just two weeks ago, utilities relied on the full capabilities of the hydropower system to supply the region with the energy it needed to keep air conditioning

systems running during the record-breaking heat dome that covered the entire Northwest. It's currently estimated that nearly 800 people died as a result of that extreme heat. Reducing the capabilities of our hydropower system doesn't just bring higher costs, but potentially puts lives at risk.

Oregon's action, while claiming to help salmon, may do more harm than good. In 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a report blaming significant declines in marine fish populations on warming, acidifying oceans caused by climate change--a trend it noted has been happening unabated for the last 50 years. Several other studies pertaining specifically to salmon support the IPCC's findings.

Given the implications of oceanic warming, asking the court to purposely waste large amounts of renewable energy is a step in the wrong direction for salmon. In the near-term, most of the replacement energy will come from existing fossil-fueled resources because new renewables can't be built quickly enough.

Furthermore, Brown's decision to litigate undermines current efforts to resolve the dams debate. Oregon is a co-organizer of the Columbia Basin Collaborative--an initiative designed to move the region beyond the courtroom as we seek common ground for salmon recovery solutions.

We have said that Oregon can't be a sincere partner or arbiter if it is litigating behind the scenes. As an organizer, Oregon needs to be above reproach so participants have the chance at a fair and unbiased outcome.

Roughly 30% of Oregon's energy needs are served by BPA-provided electricity.

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## **About Northwest RiverPartners**

Northwest RiverPartners (NWRP) is a not-for-profit, member-driven organization. We represent not-for-profit, community-owned utilities across Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Nevada. We also proudly represent farmers, ports, and businesses across the region that support clean energy and low-carbon transportation.

NWRP is focused on raising awareness about how the Northwest's hydropower system betters communities and the natural environment, and we encourage science-based solutions that help hydropower and salmon coexist and thrive. <http://nwrivernpartners.org>

