



PRESS STATEMENT

May 03, 2022
Vancouver, WA

Public Power/Farmers Roll Out Campaign to Protect Clean Energy, Fight Climate Change

Television ads up this week advocate for “Safe. Clean. Affordable.” hydropower to help meet region’s GHG responsibilities and protect farmland

PORTLAND, OR—May 3, 2022—This week Northwest RiverPartners, representing not-for-profit, community-owned electric utilities throughout the Northwest, launched an advertising campaign to support protecting the clean energy produced by the lower Snake River dams.

The four lower Snake River dams are a public resource that provide affordable, reliable, carbon-free energy and fill in the gaps for intermittent power sources like wind and solar. These dams are a critical component to helping our region meet greenhouse gas emissions targets.

“If the lower Snake River dams were removed, the only practical way to replace the power and reliability that the dams on the Snake River provide is to use more energy produced by the burning of coal and natural gas,” said Kurt Miller, executive director, Northwest RiverPartners. “We simply cannot achieve our carbon reductions timeline and maintain a reliable electricity grid without the lower Snake River dams.”

Even if the region were to replace the dams with wind or solar and batteries for backup, carbon dioxide output would increase by more than 1 million metric tons per year. The region would have to extend the use of existing fossil-fueled resources to support our grid, making the impacts of climate change even worse.

The [two ads](#) highlight the importance of the LSRD to reducing emissions and providing consistent and reliable electricity to an already strained system. A 2020 federal analysis shows losing the lower Snake River dams would double the region’s risk of blackouts if the generating capacity isn’t replaced.

“Electric utilities are ultimately responsible for the health, safety, and wellbeing of the communities we serve, and we are deeply concerned we could be heading for a reliability cliff,” said Rick Dunn, general manager, Benton Public Utility District. “During the extreme temperatures of last year’s heat dome event, all electric utilities in the Tri-Cities were put on notice localized blackouts could become necessary. Without the power and transmission grid support provided by generators at Ice Harbor dam, my community could have experienced blackouts, putting lives at risk. We need to keep the Lower Snake River dams.”

Citations for all of the facts in the ads can be found [here](#).

“Equity concerns are at the heart of utilities’ efforts to preserve the lower Snake River dams. The communities we serve, like Pacific County, Washington, include many diverse and vulnerable groups that cannot afford to lose access to the clean, affordable energy the dams provide,” said Humaira Falkenberg, power resource manager, Pacific Public Utility District. “This is not an issue of people vs. salmon, however. Extinction is not an option, and we are committed to continued habitat improvements and to fighting climate change, which is the most serious threat to salmon and steelhead.”

These ads share the benefits of the lower Snake River dams beyond affordable, safe, and reliable energy. Irrigated farmland and low-carbon shipping rely on them. If the dams were removed, 48,000 acres of irrigated farmland would be lost as well as the low-cost and low-emissions barge transportation system which would require replacement with more expensive and dirtier truck and rail infrastructure.

“This is not an either-or proposition—our region can and does have both healthy rivers and a healthy economy.,” said Alex McGregor, chairman, The McGregor Company in Colfax, Washington. “Over half of America’s wheat destined for export comes down the Columbia and Snake canyons. The largest wheat terminal in the United States, third largest in the world. Moving from barges would mean 38,000 more rail cars down the crowded lines that parallel the Columbia or 149,000 semi trucks.”

More information can be found at www.nwriverpartners.org.

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Contact: Aaron Toso, 253-495-1296, toso@tumalopublicaffairs.com

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://nwriverpartners.org>