PRESS RELEASE

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New report: Value of lower Snake River dams effectively irreplaceable in meeting region's decarbonization goals

Breaching the dams would cost $15 billion just to replace energy value, increase greenhouse gas emissions, and make decarbonizing the grid by 2045 almost impossible

Vancouver, Washington—June 29, 2022—Northwest RiverPartners today released a report analyzing the unprecedented timeline necessary to reach grid decarbonization deadlines and demonstrating the importance of preserving the lower Snake River dams (LSRD) to meet those requirements.

"The analysis demonstrates that if we are serious about reaching our climate goals, dams on the lower Snake River must remain operational," said Kurt Miller, executive director, Northwest RiverPartners. "The current risk in not meeting our region's decarbonization goals is high. Removing the Snake River dams increases that risk to the breaking point."

The report identifies the cost of new renewable power generation necessary to replace the dams to be $15 billion. Importantly, these cost estimates are only associated with power generation. They do not include the cost of building new, long-distance transmission lines or the replacement value of other requirements the dams make possible (e.g. transportation, irrigation, and recreation). The analysis was conducted by independent experts at Energy GPS Consulting and can be read here.

Oregon and Washington state's laws mandating decarbonizing electrical generation by 2040 and 2045, respectively, is a herculean task, requiring tens of billions of dollars for new renewable electricity generation resources to be built at a pace never seen before. The existing laws require a buildout of an additional 160,000 MW within the Western Power Pool (WPP) region – assuming the LSRD remain operational.

If the LSRD are removed, an additional 14,900 MW of resources will be required. This is 23% of the Pacific Northwest's current generation capacity and enough to power 15 cities the size of Seattle.

The study suggests our region is already far behind in building out the renewable generation necessary to meet the requirements of these laws. Even if the WPP region doubles its historic pace of renewable buildout, it is unlikely that state requirements are met until 2076, causing emissions in the Pacific Northwest to increase by 132 million metric tons of CO2 to maintain grid reliability.

Requiring an additional 14,900 MW of resources to be built to replace the carbon-free LSRD capacity puts further stress on the ability to achieve state policy mandates, likely adding an additional 5 MMT – 8.5 MMT of CO2 released into the atmosphere.

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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://nwriverpartners.org