



US Senator Cortez Masto
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

US Senator Jacky Rosen
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

US Representative Mark Amodei
104 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2023

Dear Senators Cortez Masto and Rosen and Representative Amodei,

We are writing to raise awareness and ask for your support regarding a policy matter of grave concern to the public power co-operatives and our members across northern Nevada. The Biden Administration is considering decommissioning four federal dams integral to keeping electricity for our members reliable and affordable. These dams are also necessary to help Nevada meet its decarbonization mandates.

As part of an effort to settle litigation regarding the Columbia River System, the Biden Administration is considering a proposal to remove the four Lower Snake River Dams (LSRD) in Washington State. The LSRD are part of the larger Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). Energy produced by the FCRPS is sold at cost and transmitted by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to its customers across the region, including our cooperatives serving Nevada.

The cooperatives we lead are full requirements customers of BPA, meaning that nearly 100% of our electricity comes from the FCRPS. Because BPA doesn't receive federal appropriations, any increases in its cost of production (like losing the lower Snake River dams) are directly passed through to public power customers, like us.

Last year, as part of the due diligence associated with the Administration's effort, BPA commissioned a study that found removal of the LSRD would result in **public power costs increases of up to 65% per year** under deep decarbonization scenarios, absent technological breakthroughs.

Our utilities serve communities defined by the Biden Administration's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) "Climate and Economic Justice Screen Tool" as "overburdened, underserved, and disadvantaged." It is these communities who will be hardest hit by massive rate increases or if we are unable to meet our decarbonization efforts on schedule.

Another study, performed last year by Energy GPS on behalf of Northwest RiverPartners, demonstrated that removing the LSRD would require an additional 15,000 megawatts of wind, solar, and batteries to be installed at the cost of an additional \$15 billion (net present value) if we are to meet the West's decarbonization mandates. To put this into perspective, 15,000 megawatts is roughly the size of 15 large nuclear power plants worth of energy.

This same analysis showed that removal of LSRD's carbon-free electricity from the Western grid would delay the fulfillment of decarbonization laws by 3 to 5 years and add 5 to 9 million metric tons of CO2 to the atmosphere.

Just as important, we are already confronting unprecedented challenges in ensuring reliability of the Western grid due to extreme weather and the retirement of fossil fueled generation. Furthermore, policies aimed at electrifying transportation and home heating to fight climate change may double the demand for power by 2050. The Western Electricity Coordinating Council has forecasted that all subregions of the Western Grid will be at risk of blackouts as early as 2025.

The number of reportable energy emergency events has increased over the last four years with the West experiencing 10 Level 3 Energy Emergency Alerts (EEAs) – the highest level ever recorded – in 2022. The average duration of these events was more than 200 minutes, exceeding the average duration for EEAs in previous years by almost double.

Battery energy storage systems are important, but the most advanced systems can only store 8-12 hours' worth of electricity. Because heatwaves and cold snaps last days at a time, they don't do much to reduce the risk of blackouts.

BPA's hydropower system is vitally important to Nevada for an additional reason. The Pacific Northwest-based system provides important geographical diversity for Nevada's power supply. Both BPA and the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group have performed precipitation analyses that indicate that Pacific Northwest hydro will continue to supply the region with much needed reliable power into the foreseeable future, even under climate change scenarios.

Put simply, BPA power is baked into the economy of Northern Nevada and removal of the Lower Snake River dams would cause direct harm to the people, communities, economy, and environment we work to serve and protect.

The current stay in the litigation that is driving the Snake River dam removal proposal is currently scheduled to expire on August 31, 2023. You have long been a tremendous advocate on behalf of your Northern Nevada constituents, and we need your voice now to help prevent the devastation removal of these dams would cause to the people we all serve.

Sincerely,

Clay Fitch
General Manager
Wells Rural Electric Cooperative

Chad Black
General Manager
Raft River Electric Cooperative

Fred Flippence
General Manager
Harney Electric Cooperative