



PRESS RELEASE

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Vancouver, WA

Ratepayer Owned Public Utilities Launch Ads to Protect Affordable, Reliable, and Clean Power for Communities

The Biden Administration's consideration of a proposal to tear down dams public utilities in Northern Nevada rely on could raise electricity rates by up to 65%.

Vancouver, Washington—August 25, 2023—On behalf of four of its Nevada members, Northwest RiverPartners today launched ads that urge the Biden Administration to protect affordable, reliable, and clean hydropower.

There are four public electric utility cooperatives serving Northern Nevada which receive nearly 100% of their electricity from the Federal Columbia River Power System managed by the Bonneville Power Administration. Nevadans affected by power rate increases would be customers of Surprise Valley Electrification Corporation in Washoe County; Harney Electric Cooperative in Humboldt County; Wells Rural Electric Company in Elko and Eureka Counties; and Raft River Rural Electric Cooperative in Elko County.

“As a small, customer owned utility, we purchase power from the Bonneville Power Administration. BPA power is baked into the economy of Northern Nevada. Many of our co-op members may not even know that hydroelectric dams on the Columbia and Snake River provide almost 100% of the electricity for our community. Without these dams, our rates would be forced to increase,” said Clay Fitch, CEO, Wells Rural Electric Cooperative.

A study commissioned by the Bonneville Power Administration in 2022 examined replacement resources and costs for impacts associated with the removal of the lower Snake River dams. Under a “deep decarbonization” scenario with no new combustion, the analysis identified cost increases of up to 65% for public power customers.

Losing the dams on the lower Snake River would not only hurt Nevadans by raising electricity prices, it would also hurt electricity reliability and Nevada’s ability to meet state greenhouse gas emissions goals in communities who have already seen the

impacts of climate change from fires, heat domes, and even remnants of a tropical storm.

Utilities are already confronting unprecedented challenges in ensuring reliability of the Western grid due to extreme weather and the retirement of fossil fueled generation. 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. In confronting these challenges, the United States can't afford to lose any clean, reliable source of energy like the hydropower Nevadans depend on.

The public utilities at greatest risk of rate increases serve communities defined by the Biden Administration's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) "Climate and Economic Justice Screen Tool" as "overburdened, underserved, and disadvantaged."

Chad Black, General Manager of the Raft River Rural Electric Cooperative, "Many of our members find it challenging to carry the energy burden they already do, and it is these communities who will be hardest hit by massive rate increases if we are unable to meet our decarbonization efforts on schedule."

Guided by a stay order issued by the U.S. District Court of Oregon, The Biden Administration has entered into private meetings with plaintiffs to try to resolve the litigation related to the Columbia River System. The stay order articulates a set of "Federal Government Commitments" which include: "The Administration commits to exploring lower Snake River habitat restoration opportunities, including but not limited to migration corridor restoration through breaching the four lower Snake River dams." The State of Nevada is not represented in the settlement discussions.

It is difficult for these public utilities to watch the federal government negotiating behind closed doors on something that is imperative to Nevadans. The Biden Administration owes the people of Nevada and these co-op members more answers on whether they intend to raise electricity rates and set back our nation's clean energy goals.

Earlier this summer representatives from Harney Electric Cooperative, Raft River Electric Cooperative, and Wells Rural Electric Cooperative sent a letter to the Nevada Congressional delegation expressing these concerns. You can read the letter [here](#).

You can watch the ad here: <https://youtu.be/bBTxO5LETRw>

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About Northwest RiverPartners

Northwest RiverPartners is a not-for-profit, member-driven organization.

Members include community-owned utilities, ports, and businesses from across the northwestern United States. The organization is focused on raising awareness about how the Northwest's hydropower system betters communities and the natural environment and encourages [science-based solutions that help](#) hydropower and salmon coexist and thrive.

<http://nwrivernpartners.org>