



PRESS STATEMENT

October 31, 2023
Vancouver, WA

Statement from Northwest RiverPartners on latest legal delay

Vancouver, Washington—October 31, 2023—Today, the United States Government announced that it would be producing for comment a draft package of “actions and commitments” that it developed in secret with plaintiffs’ groups. We have been provided with no other details other than that we will have 30 to 45 days of “engagement” in a “conferral” process to review the document(s). This action is more of the same by only including ratepayer advocates after the fact.

Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners responded, “The US Government, led by the Council on Environmental Quality, is keeping those who keep your lights on in the dark. As a nonprofit representing more than three million ratepayers throughout the five-state region, Northwest RiverPartners will be reviewing these documents in the context of climate change, grid reliability, affordability, and science.”

Key questions:

Do the proposed actions and commitments help the region meet its climate change policy objectives?

We are already feeling the effects of climate change in our region, with our most vulnerable populations bearing the hardest burdens of those impacts. During the 2021 heat dome, we lost over 500 people to the effects of the high temperatures. We can only meet the challenges of climate change by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels.

Today, about a third of Washington state’s electricity is generated by burning fossil fuels. To reduce emissions, we need every renewable energy source available. In the NW, our biggest renewable energy source is hydroelectricity. Study after study indicates that we cannot meet our

emissions reduction goals without fully employing every one of our hydro assets. Removing any productive renewable hydro facility before reaching our climate change goals means burning more fossil fuels.

Do the proposed actions and commitments support grid reliability for the region?

The Western Electricity Coordinating Council has forecasted that all subregions of the Western Grid will be at risk of blackouts as early as 2025. And efforts to further decarbonize our economy are driving electric demand growth like we've never seen before. Different evaluations of growth in load demand range between 50% - 140% by 2050, depending on where you are in the region.

At the same time as we are increasing demand, we are retiring supply in the form of dispatchable coal and gas assets. NW RiverPartners performed an analysis that indicates that the region must add 160 GW of new clean energy capacity in the next 20 years to meet our decarbonization objectives. That is over double our existing generating capacity. These numbers assume that all our existing hydro assets remain in place.

The Bonneville Power Administration, University of Washington, and Stanford University have performed analyses that indicate that Pacific Northwest hydro – unlike some other hydro in the West – will continue to supply the region with much needed reliable power into the foreseeable future.

Do the proposed actions and commitments support energy affordability?

A study commissioned by the Bonneville Power Administration in 2022 examined replacement resources and cost impacts associated with removal of the Lower Snake River dams. The analysis identified cost increases of up to 65% for public power customers.

Public utilities are not looking to make a profit or pay a dividend to shareholders. The rates our consumers pay are tied directly to the cost that's required to deliver them energy. Our public utilities serve millions of customers throughout the region every day, many of whom struggle with their bills. Electricity is an essential human service and as we respond to and try to mitigate the impacts of climate change, our most vulnerable

populations will be most exposed and most impacted by the costs of dealing with it.

Do the proposed actions and commitments have a scientific basis in salmon recovery?

Mounting scientific evidence shows that the greatest threat to salmon survival is the impacts of climate change. NOAA scientists have determined:

- “Our analysis showed relative resilience in freshwater stages, with the dominant driver toward extinction being rising SST (sea surface temperature), which tracked a ~90% decline in survival in the marine life stage.”
- “This recent downturn in adult abundance is thought to be driven primarily by marine environmental conditions and a decline in ocean productivity, because hydropower operations, the overall availability and quality of tributary and estuary habitat, and hatchery practices have been relatively constant or improving over the past 10 years.”

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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>