

**Northwest RiverPartners**  
**“Bad Idea”**  
**Ad Facts**

**“Talk about a bad idea.”**

**“The Biden Administration is talking about a plan to eliminate hydropower dams Northern Nevada relies on,”**

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 cooperative utilities serving Nevada. BPA is a self-funding, nonprofit federal power marketing administration within the U.S. Department of Energy.<sup>i</sup>

There are four electric utility cooperatives serving Northern Nevada which are full requirements customers of BPA, meaning that nearly 100% of their electricity comes from the FCRPS.<sup>ii</sup> 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 the utilities serving Northern Nevada.

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. BPA<sup>iii</sup>, Stanford University scientists<sup>iv</sup>, and the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group<sup>v</sup> 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.

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. 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.

**“raising power rates for some Nevadans by nearly 65%”**

A study commissioned by the BPA in 2022 examined replacement resources and cost impacts associated with 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.<sup>vi</sup>

**“And making it harder for us to meet our clean energy goals.”**

Nevada law, enacted in 2019, requires the state to generate 50% of its electricity from renewable resources by 2030 and aim for 100% carbon-free resources by 2050.

The federal government’s own analysis in the Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement concluded that removal of the Lower Snake River dams would increase greenhouse gas emissions by 1.3 – 3.3 million tons a year by causing the region to rely on fossil generation longer and by replacing low-emissions barge transport with trucks and trains.<sup>vii</sup>

**“The last thing we need is to remove clean safe reliable hydropower.”**

The Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) is a non-profit corporation that exists to assure a reliable Bulk Electric System in the geographic area known as the Western Interconnection. WECC has been approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory

Commission (FERC) as the Regional Entity for the Western Interconnection. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) delegated some of its authority to create, monitor, and enforce reliability standards to WECC through a Delegation Agreement. In their latest publication of the State of the Interconnection, 2023 they found:

- In the past two years, the West experienced extreme weather ranging from heat waves and dry spells to extreme winter storms and atmospheric rivers. The frequency, duration, and seasons of extreme events have increased over the last 40 years.
- These trends promise to continue. Over the last 50 years, the average length of the heat wave season in the United States has more than doubled—from 34 days in the 1970s, to over 73 days currently.

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council identifies “The region’s hydropower system – the biggest generating resource and “battery” in place” in its 2021 Power Plan and states, “Hydropower generation remains the cornerstone of the Pacific Northwest power system, dominating the regional energy supply.”

Why this is relevant to Nevada: The Council also identifies hydro’s unique role in supporting deployment of intermittent renewable assets: “The substantial increases in renewable generation across the West shifts power system generation and transforms power markets. The oversupply of renewable generation during the day rapidly shifts to a need for other resources during the evening when the sun is down. Since hydropower has a low variable cost and is flexible, our analysis shows that it is well positioned to help the region absorb increasing renewable generation and ensure adequacy in the region.” This statement gets at the fact that because the western grid is interconnected by transmission lines, impacts in the Pacific

Northwest will be felt across the entire western region.

**“Just as increasing emissions is speeding up climate change”**

“Global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions grew by 0.9% or 321 Mt in 2022, reaching a new high of over 36.8 Gt.”<sup>viii</sup>

“America’s greenhouse gas emissions from energy and industry rose last year, moving the nation in the opposite direction from its climate goals, according to preliminary estimates published Tuesday by the Rhodium Group, a nonpartisan research firm.”<sup>ix</sup>

“Emissions ticked up 1.3 percent even as renewable energy surpassed coal power nationwide for the first time in over six decades, with wind, solar and hydropower generating 22 percent of the country’s electricity compared with 20 percent from coal. Growth in natural gas power generation also compensated for coal’s decline.”<sup>x</sup>

“Levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane and nitrous oxide, the three greenhouse gases emitted by human activity that are the most significant contributors to climate change, continued their historically high rates of growth in the atmosphere during 2022, according to NOAA scientists.”<sup>xi</sup>

For Nevada: “Emissions from the residential and commercial sectors are expected to continue to increase, driven by population and economic growth; . . . Upward trends in the transportation, industrial, and residential and emissions reduction in the electricity generation sector.”<sup>xii</sup>

**“And our region faces a growing demand for clean affordable energy,”**

“In 2019, the Nevada Legislature passed SB 358, which requires that by 2030, 50% of electricity sold to the state must come from renewable sources. SB 358 also declares that it is state policy to become a leading producer and consumer of clean and renewable energy, with the 2050 goal of all energy sold by

providers of electric service to come from renewable sources.”<sup>xiii</sup>

As required by NRS 445B.380, the State of Nevada has identified policy options that could achieve reductions in projected greenhouse gas emissions. Policies under consideration for meeting these objectives include:

“Adopt a Mandatory Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) of 100% By or Before 2050”<sup>xiv</sup>

“Transition from Fossil Fuel-Fired Electricity Generation to Clean Energy Sources” including:

- Enact a freeze on the approval or construction of any new fossil fuel-fired electricity generating sources.”
- Accelerate retirement of remaining coal-fired electric generating units (EGUs) operating in Nevada, including merchant and load-serving plants.”<sup>xv</sup>

\* “Require GHG Reduction Plans and Prioritize Decarbonization in Utility Integrated Resource Plans”<sup>xvi</sup>

**“Call the Biden Administration and tell them to protect Nevada’s power. Now.”**

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.bpa.gov/about>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://puc.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/pucnv.gov/Content/Utilities/Nevada\\_Rural\\_Utility\\_Service\\_Areas.pdf](https://puc.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/pucnv.gov/Content/Utilities/Nevada_Rural_Utility_Service_Areas.pdf). The four full requirements BPA customers in NV include: Surprise Valley Electrification Corporation, serving parts of Washoe County; Harney Electric Cooperative, serving parts of Humboldt County; Wells Rural Electric Company, serving parts of Elko and Eureka Counties; and Raft River Rural Electric Cooperative, serving parts of Elko County.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.bpa.gov/about/newsroom/news-articles/2022/20220801-bpa-adopts-new-streamflow-forecast-to-reflect-changing-climate>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2300395120>

<sup>v</sup> <https://cig.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/12/snoveretalsok2013sec5.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.bpa.gov/-/media/Aep/power/hydropower-data-studies/e3-bpa-lower-snake-river-dams-power-replacement-study.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> “Executive Summary: Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement,” pp. 31-32.

<https://www.bpa.gov/-/media/Aep/efw/nepa/active/columbia-river-systems-operations-project-eis/crso-final-eis-exec-summary.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> International Energy Agency, “CO2 Emissions in 2022,” <https://www.iea.org/reports/co2-emissions-in-2022>

<sup>ix</sup> “ U.S. Carbon Emissions Grew in 2022,” by Elana Shao, *The New York Times*, January 10, 2023: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/10/climate/us-carbon-emissions-2022.html>

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<sup>x</sup> “ U.S. Carbon Emissions Grew in 2022,” by Elana Shao, *The New York Times*, January 10, 2023:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/10/climate/us-carbon-emissions-2022.html>

<sup>xi</sup> <https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/greenhouse-gases-continued-to-increase-rapidly-in-2022>

<sup>xii</sup> “Nevada Statewide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Projections, 1990-2041,” Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, 2021 Report: [https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg_report_2021.pdf)

<sup>xiii</sup> “Nevada Statewide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Projections, 1990-2041,” Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, 2021 Report: [https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg_report_2021.pdf)

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<sup>xv</sup> “Nevada Statewide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Projections, 1990-2041,” Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, 2021 Report: [https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg_report_2021.pdf)

<sup>xvi</sup> “Nevada Statewide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Projections, 1990-2041,” Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, 2021 Report: [https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://ndep.nv.gov/uploads/air-pollutants-docs/ghg_report_2021.pdf)