



NEWS RELEASE

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Benton PUD and Franklin PUD Commissions pass resolutions supporting federal legislation to protect the Snake River dams

(Tri-Cities) Today, Benton PUD and Franklin PUD Commissions passed resolutions in support of federal legislation that affirms the current operations under the existing Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion (BiOp). Other utilities also passed resolutions including Mason PUD 1 and Mason PUD 3 (Shelton, WA).

The legislation, H.R. 3144, proposed on a bipartisan basis by Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Dan Newhouse (R-WA), Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA), Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and Greg Walden (R-OR), supports the hydrosystem and the benefits it brings to the region through clean, renewable and affordable power.

The legislation requires the federal agencies responsible for the management of the FCRPS (Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation) to operate the hydro system in compliance with the 2014 Supplemental BiOp until 2022 or until the court-ordered comprehensive NEPA process concludes, a new BiOp is in place, and judicial review is complete. It also would continue, as appropriate, the implementation of the plan's measures to protect and restore salmon.

Despite the success of the current FCRPS BiOp, Judge Simon, United States District Court for the District of Oregon, rejected the plan and ruled all options need to be reviewed including breaching or removing one or more of the four Snake River dams.

The bill provides relief in the endless litigation of federal hydro system operations by directing the federal agencies to implement the current BiOp that has been vetted and supported by previous presidential administration's top scientists and resulted in wild salmon numbers trending significantly upward due to changes in operations and the installation of new passage technologies.

"We greatly appreciate our legislators' ongoing support of the hydrosystem and introducing this bill. The legislation is needed to protect the Snake River dams and the renewable, carbon-free, affordable and reliable hydropower provided to our customers and the customers across the region," said Benton PUD Commissioner Barry Bush.

"BPA has spent \$15.28 billion on infrastructure and fish mitigation projects since 1978 which is paid for by our customers through their electric bills. These investments have worked at our dams, including removable spillway weirs, fish ladders and other energy efficiency upgrades. In partnership with BPA, we will continue to support this work so that our region remains environmentally responsible while taking advantage of all the benefits of our river system," said Franklin PUD Commissioner Bill Gordon.

(end)

Background:

The federal legislation H.R. 3144 - "To provide for operations of the Federal Columbia River Power System pursuant to a certain operation plan for a specified period of time":

- Offers a creative solution that is good for both listed salmon and the economy of the Northwest and Benton County.
- Provides relief in the endless litigation of federal hydro system operations by directing the federal agencies to implement the current federal salmon plan, known as the 2014 Supplemental BiOp. This BiOp was vetted and supported by past Presidential Administration's top scientists and has resulted in wild salmon numbers trending significantly upward due to changes in operations and the installation of new passage technologies.
- Provides time for the federal agencies to complete the court-ordered NEPA environmental review process analyzing federal hydro system operations and focuses the general agencies limited resources on getting that process right. Without the legislation, the agencies would be compelled to author a new 2018 BiOp without the benefit of the new science and public input provided by the comprehensive NEPA review.
- Avoids experiments or spill tests at the eight Columbia and Snake dams, and studies and modifications at the dams which would restrict electrical generation, which would create uncertainties in BPA's power costs and supply and raise Northwest electric customers' rates.

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