

American Rivers • Association of Northwest Steelheaders • Audubon Society of Portland
• Center for Biological Diversity • Center for Environmental Law and Policy • Columbia
Riverkeeper • Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light • Endangered Species
Coalition • Engineers for a Sustainable Future • Faith Action Network • Federation of
Western Outdoor Clubs • Great Old Broads for Wilderness • Idaho Conservation League •
Idaho Rivers United • Idaho Wildlife Federation • Institute for Fisheries Resources •
National Wildlife Federation • Northwest Guides and Anglers Association • Northwest
Sportfishing Industry Association • NW Energy Coalition • Oregon Coast Alliance •
Oregon League of Conservation Voters • Oregon Wild • Pacific Coast Federation of
Fishermen's Associations • Save Our wild Salmon Coalition • Sierra Club • Spokane
Riverkeeper • Washington Wildlife Federation • WaterWatch of Oregon • Whale Scout •
Wild Orca • Wild Steelhead Coalition

September 14, 2022

Secretary Antony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington D.C. 20522-00992201

Jill Smail
Chief Negotiator for the Columbia River Treaty
U.S. Department of State
C Street NW
Washington D.C. 20522-0099

John Hairston
Administrator and CEO
Bonneville Power Administration
905 NE 11th Avenue
Portland OR 97232

Colonel Geoff Van Epps
Northwestern Division Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd #400
Portland OR 97232

Re: Columbia River Treaty and Flood Operations

Dear Secretary Blinken, Chief Negotiator Smail, Administrator Hairston, and
Commander Helton,

We write on behalf of millions of Northwest people, united for the health of the Columbia
River. We represent conservation, clean energy, faith, fishing, and civic groups, and
water-based businesses, in the Northwest states. Thank you for considering our requests.

This summer's intense heat across our region, following directly on the heels of last
summer's record breaking heat dome, is one more in an accelerating series of events
demonstrating why the Columbia River Treaty needs major overhaul to serve Northwest
people today and into the future. Chronic hot water is killing salmon and degrading
Columbia and Snake River health today, with worse coming. A modern treaty must give
Northwest people greater standing and more tools to withstand this rising damage.

For these reasons we ask you, the U.S. Negotiating Team, and the U.S. Entity, once again to partner with Canada to add Ecosystem Function - the health of the river - as a third, co-equal treaty purpose. And we urge the Administration to include Columbia Basin tribes in Treaty governance, matching Canada's recognition of Indigenous Nations' future role in Treaty implementation. This will begin to redress the injustice the treaty has imposed on the tribes for six decades, and help our region take full advantage of tribal expertise, traditional knowledge, science, and resources to assure river health.

Our final request concerns flood risk operations. As you know, we currently benefit from a collaborative flood risk management plan that is dependent upon assured Canadian storage to minimize flood risk in the U.S. This critical collaboration ends on September 16, 2024 if negotiations fail to extend the collaborative approach by that day. We see signs now that Congress is preparing for unspecified 'called upon' operation of reservoirs after that date. Such operations have a high risk of further degrading already inadequate flows and cooling operations from critical reservoirs for salmon, other fish, and overall river health. This risk compounds if 'called upon' operations take place under the current treaty, in which for 58 years salmon and river health have been at best secondary and at worst ignored. The U.S. projects potentially most affected - Grand Coulee, Libby, Hungry Horse, Dworshak, Brownlee, Albeni Falls, Seli's Ksanka Qlispe' (formerly Kerr), and John Day - today carry significant fish, wildlife, recreation, cultural and community obligations that 'called upon' operations will put at risk. It is also worth emphasizing that other river uses, including power generation and agriculture, are also at risk of disruption in a 'called upon' scenario. This view is shared by the treaty's bi-national Permanent Engineering Board, which warns in [its latest report](#) that the general lack of planning leaves us with "...no guidance on the operation of the Canadian storage system with significant consequences in both Canada and the US for power generation, flood risk management and social and environmental objectives."

Yet, with just two years remaining before the Northwest tumbles into the uncertainties and dangers of 'called upon' operations (and only one year until detailed planning for this scenario must begin), no federal effort is underway to engage Northwest people and communities as participants in deciding what 'called upon' will mean. No information on options, trade-offs and risks is being shared with those who will bear the consequences. It is as if looming changes in Columbia Basin reservoir operations are as confidential to affected Northwest people as are the Treaty negotiations themselves.

The best outcome for flood operations is prompt agreement by the U.S. and Canada on a new Columbia River Treaty which includes Ecosystem Function as a treaty purpose and expands treaty governance to reflect that. The health of the river would then have a seat at the treaty table when new coordinated flood risk management operations are developed, and U.S. river users would not be abruptly plunged into the uncertainties of a 'called upon' regime.

But best outcome or worst, it is past time to make affected Northwest people and communities partners in federal planning, and decisions, for Columbia-Snake river system management post-September 2024. We request that the U.S. Negotiating Team and/or U.S. Entity initiate formal contact about looming changes and options with the full

range of river users, communities, and sovereigns. We believe, as Canada is demonstrating, that citizens can be actively engaged while the confidentiality of negotiations is honored.

We will seek a meeting with you soon to discuss these concerns and seek information. Thank you for considering our views. We wish you success in securing a modern Columbia River Treaty with Canada that adds Ecosystem Function - the health of the river - to the treaty's mission and governance. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Bob Rees
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Northwest Guides and Anglers Association

Bob Sallinger
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Audubon Society of Portland

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CC:

Senator Maria Cantwell, Washington
Senator Patty Murray, Washington
Senator Jeff Merkley, Oregon
Senator Ron Wyden, Oregon
Senator James Risch, Idaho
Senator Mike Crapo, Idaho
Senator Jon Tester, Montana
Senator Steve Daines, Montana
Jay Inslee, Governor, State of Washington
Kate Brown, Governor, State of Oregon
Brad Little, Governor, State of Idaho
Greg Gianforte, Governor, State of Montana
David Barnett, Chair, Cowlitz Tribe of Indians
Delano Saluskin, Chair, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Kat Brigham, Chair, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Jonathan Smith, Chair, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
Samuel N. Penney, Chair, Nez Perce Tribe
Chief Allan, Chair, Coeur d'Alene Tribe of Indians
Jarred Michael Erickson, Chair, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Glen D. Nenema, Chair, Kalispel Tribe of Indians
Gary Aitken Jr., Chair, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Carol Evans, Chair, Spokane Tribe of Indians
Tom McDonald, Chair, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation
Brian Thomas, Chair, Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation
Devon Boyer, Chair, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation
Maxine Redstar, Chair, Fort McDermitt Paiute Shoshone Tribe
Diane Teeman, Chair, Burns Paiute Tribe