

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Northwest Groups Host Webinar to Discuss the Road Map for Modernizing the Columbia River Treaty to Avoid Ecosystem Collapse

WHAT: Pacific Northwest-based organizations that sent a [letter](#) to the State Department and other federal agencies earlier this month urging the U.S. to overhaul the 1964 U.S.-Canada Columbia River Treaty are hosting a webinar: “Modernizing the Columbia River Treaty: Where do we go from here?”. The interactive webinar is open to the public and will focus on exploring the current state of Treaty negotiations and what the U.S. needs to do to modernize the treaty to avoid ecosystem collapse.

WHEN: Tuesday, October 4 from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. PST

WHERE: Zoom; sign-up here: tinyurl.com/ColumbiaRTWebinar

WHO: A range of speakers from Northwest NGOs and Columbia Basin tribes will present, discuss the ethics of modernizing the treaty, and answer audience questions. Speakers include:

- **Joseph Bogaard**, Executive Director of Save Our wild Salmon and U.S. NGO Treaty Caucus representative
- **DR Michel**, Executive Director of Upper Columbia River Tribes
- **Jessica Zimmerle**, Advocacy Director for Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light and U.S. NGO Treaty Caucus representative
- **Jim Heffernan**, Policy Analyst at Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

WHY: The current, 58-year-old Treaty has only two priorities: maximizing hydropower production and engineered flood control. The organizations are calling on U.S. leaders to add Ecosystem Function – the health of the river and its ecosystems – as a third primary purpose of the Treaty. With escalating climate impacts like flooding, heat waves, wildfires, and rivers too hot for salmon and other fish, it is essential that the operation of the Columbia Basin hydrosystem be updated to maximize resilience of the watershed and the communities that depend on it. The Treaty plays a significant role in shaping river flows and dam operations across the basin as more than a third of the Columbia’s water comes from Canada, including some of its coldest and most climate resilient sources. Among other positive changes, prioritizing Ecosystem Function means ensuring that fish have sufficient river flows in spring and early summer, especially in low to average water years.

The two countries have been in negotiations to update - or 'modernize' - the Columbia River Treaty for over four years. If a new agreement is not reached in less than two years, the terms of the current Treaty will shift responsibility for flood control south of the border from Canada to the U.S., potentially forcing major operational changes at eight dams and reservoirs located in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. Given the lack of transparency to date, signatories on the letter are increasingly worried about how the federal government will deal with uncertainties and operational changes while protecting fish and wildlife, honoring tribal treaty obligations, and supporting river communities.

The signatories also call on Canada to work expeditiously with the U.S. to find agreement on a modernized Treaty that benefits both sides of the watershed for decades to come. The Columbia is one river and the two countries it flows through face a shared future. Notably, federal, provincial, and Indigenous governments in Canada are pursuing the reintroduction of salmon to blocked areas with great public support. The success of this effort depends on the health of downstream river conditions and salmon runs in the U.S.

Learn more at ColumbiaRiverTreaty.org.

***The U.S. NGO Treaty Caucus** is an alliance of Northwest-based civic, faith, energy, and conservation organizations working for a modernized Columbia River Treaty that will serve our region's diverse needs now and into the future. Core members include the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light, League of Women Voters of Washington, Natural Resource Defense Council, Northwest Energy Coalition, Save Our wild Salmon Coalition, Sierra Club, and WaterWatch of Oregon.*

***Complete list of organizations that signed the letter:** 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*

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