

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 15, 2014

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write to express our strong interest in the future of the 1964 Columbia River Treaty (Treaty) and to urge the Administration to make consideration of this issue a priority this year. This is an issue of paramount importance for the entire Pacific Northwest as it directly affects our economy, the environment, and the flood control needs of communities along more than 1,200 miles of the Columbia River and its tributaries.

The Columbia River Treaty provided the framework for the United States and Canada to invest in greater water storage capabilities within the Columbia River basin and to better coordinate flood control and power generation for the benefit of both nations. For fifty years, the Treaty has enhanced the production of clean, renewable hydropower and provided greater protection against severe flooding. Significant changes to the Treaty, up to and including potential termination, can take effect as early as September 2024 with ten years notice by either country. While certain provisions related to flood control will automatically expire in 2024, most of the Treaty will continue in perpetuity without intervention by either country, including the outdated formula by which the United States compensates Canada for power coordination benefits.

On December 13, 2013, the designated "U.S. Entity" under the Treaty, the Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presented the "Regional Recommendation for the Future of the Columbia River Treaty after 2024" (Recommendation) to the Administration and the U.S. Department of State outlining nine principles for a modernized Treaty. This document reflects years of collaboration and engagement with domestic stakeholders throughout the Pacific Northwest and the U.S. Entity's work to achieve regional consensus on complex river management issues. In our view, it is essential that the Administration now advance this work through discussions with Canada to ensure that a post-2024 Treaty better reflects the interests of our constituents in the region and the United States as a whole.

As you convene an Interagency Policy Committee on the Recommendation, we draw your attention to the Recommendation's clear call for a decision and action by the Administration on this matter by mid-year:

The region recommends that the U.S. government make a decision by mid-2014 to proceed with a renegotiation of the Treaty with Canada in order to modernize the Treaty by incorporating the objectives in this regional recommendation. Further, the region

recommends that the U.S. government seek to complete that effort no later than 2015. If the United States and Canada are unable to achieve agreement on key aspects of a modernized Treaty by 2015, other options to create a modernized post-2024 Treaty should be evaluated.<sup>1</sup>

We agree that it is critical that this process move forward in a timely fashion in order to best position the United States for a positive outcome in future discussions with Canada.

The Columbia River provides significant economic and cultural benefits to our region and how it is managed through the Treaty will have major impacts into the future. Therefore, it is important that you remain in regular and close communication with the Pacific Northwest Congressional Delegation during the Interagency Policy Committee process and keep us apprised of potential negotiations with Canada. In addition, we encourage the Administration to remain open to input from and engagement with concerned regional stakeholders, many of whom have valuable expertise in managing the Columbia River and played an integral role in developing the Recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. We look forward to working closely with you on this vital matter.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray

James R. Kinch

Ron Wyden

Maria Cantwell

Mike Crozo

Jeffrey A. Mackley

John E. Walsh

Alan H. H. H.

Pete DeFazio

Doug Walden

Rick Larsen

Cathy McPherson-Rodgers

Lynda D. B.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Entity Regional Recommendation for the Future of the Columbia River Treaty after 2024, Page 7

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cc: The Honorable John Kerry, Secretary, U.S. Department of State  
The Honorable Caroline Tess, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of State  
The Honorable Rachel Poynter, Director for North America Western Hemisphere Affairs,  
National Security Council  
The Honorable Ernest Moniz, Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy  
The Honorable Daniel Poneman, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy  
The Honorable Elliot Mainzer, Administrator, Bonneville Power Administration  
The Honorable John McHugh, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Army  
The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), U.S.  
Department of the Army  
Brigadier General John Kem, Commander, Northwest Division, U.S. Army Corps of  
Engineers  
The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior  
The Honorable Michael Connor, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior  
The Honorable Penny Pritzker, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce  
The Honorable Kathryn Sullivan, Administrator, National Oceanic & Atmospheric  
Administration