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March 28, 2018

The Honorable Dan Newhouse
U.S. House of Representatives
1318 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative Newhouse,

I write to you today to encourage support of HR 3144. Construction of the four Lower Snake River dams – Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite – began in 1962. The goal at that time was to build structures that would provide efficient production of energy, transportation of goods and supplying water to Washington’s vibrant agricultural sector. Today, the dams produce 40 percent of the region’s energy through clean hydropower generation, support agricultural production and transportation, and improve our quality of life by lifting the economy and supporting recreation. They are also integral to flood control.

Equally critical, the dams support healthy fish and wildlife populations and their complex life cycles, thanks to a series of improvements to the dams set out in Federal Columbia River Power System’s (FCRPS) 2014 biological opinion (BiOp). This BiOp’s success is due in part to a strong partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), outlining a salmon management plan for the 13 stocks of Columbia and Snake river salmon and steelhead protected under the Endangered Species Act.

In a supplemental BiOp in January 2014, NOAA confirmed that improvements at federal dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers, rehabilitation of habitat, and other actions are benefiting federally protected salmon and steelhead as much as, or more than, anticipated five years before when the plan was put in place and before court orders were put in place in 2011 to re-examine the two previous BiOps.

Proper fish ladders have been installed to ensure healthy migration of salmon and other fish to spawning grounds up river and the Army Corps of Engineers’ Walla Walla division has been instrumental in controlling river temperatures through release of reservoir water during the hot summer days. Goals of achieving clean energy, a healthy environment and a sustainable future are being realized.

Noting the successful efforts, HR 3144 was introduced to keep the 2014 BiOp in place until 2022 – a move that would build on the successful and steady fish migration and habitat restoration gains. The Association of Washington Business (AWB) believes that now is not the time to abandon the comprehensive BiOp plan that is fostering collaboration that is leading to real results for fish and wildlife.

Employers, our congressional delegation, NOAA and others are taking the challenge of meeting our region’s energy needs with clean, renewable hydropower while preserving the natural environment seriously. The success speaks for itself. AWB urges your support of HR 3144.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kris", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Kris Johnson
President & CEO