



# United Power Trades Organization

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Jack W. Heffling • President

March 22, 2018

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resource  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva,

I am writing on behalf of the United Power Trades Organization (UPTO) to express our support for H.R. 3144 which requires federal agencies to manage the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) in accordance with the 2014 Supplemental Biological Opinion (Bi-Op). UPTO represents over 600 blue collar employees that work at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dams on the Columbia-Snake River system.

Our organization is made up of not only maintenance personnel, but power plant operators who are responsible for operating the lock and dam facilities in accordance with the Bi-Op. I have been one of those operators for over 30 years and have personally seen the improvements made at our facilities that have greatly improved fish survival. It is very frustrating when outside interests persuade judicial orders that change the way we operate to the detriment of fish survival.

Contrary to misinformation that has been widely reported, spilling water over the dams has not been the primary reason for increases in fish survival through the Columbia-Snake River system. There have been many reasons that fish survival has improved including habitat restoration, better oceanic conditions and summer flow augmentation. But a major reason for improved fish survival is the transportation program. Fish entering the generating turbine intakes are directed by rotating screens into bypass channels to fish collection facilities where they are loaded on to barges and given a free ride to below Bonneville dam where they are released back in to the river. Fish transported by barge are five times more likely to survive than those that traverse the river.

Spilling water over the dams not only costs the taxpayers millions in lost power generation, but is actually detrimental to fish survival. Fish that pass through the spillgates are not

collected for transport by barge, thus less likely to survive than those that are collected. In addition, the more water that is spilled over the dams, the more supersaturation of nitrogen in the water occurs resulting in gas bubble trauma to juvenile fish. More spill just doesn't make sense in that it is costly economically, doesn't help the fish, and can even be detrimental to fish survival.

H.R. 3144 is important in that it continues programs and operating procedures that have been proven extremely successful in migrating fish survival. The Bi-Op is working and making changes make absolutely no sense. Fish returns are higher than what they were prior to the first dam built on the Columbia-Snake river system and, although hatchery fish are returning in large numbers, natural fish returns are up as well too. Fish survival through the Columbia-Snake River dams are at levels that meet or exceed those on rivers that don't have dams. The current Bi-Op is the most science-based, comprehensive and expensive effort to restore an endangered species in the nation. \$1.6 billion have been invested in new technologies and, when operated according to the Bi-Op, have proven that the dams and fish can co-exist.

Continuing to operate the dams according to the Bi-Op is imperative for continued high rate of survival for migrating fish. H.R. 3144 requires that continuity and is therefore imperative to the continued high survival rate of migrating fish. UPTO urges support for H.R. 3144 in committee and swift advancement to the House floor.

Sincerely,

Jack W. Heffling, President  
United Power Trades Organization