

Wes McCart
Stevens County Commissioner
Eastern Washington Council of Governments
Vice Chair

Re: U.S. House of Representatives – Committee on Natural Resources Hearing
“The future of the US-Canada Columbia River Treaty – Building on 60 years of Coordinated Power Generation and Flood Control.”
December 9, 2013

Honorable Chairman Doc Hastings and members of the Committee, please accept the following testimony for the record on behalf of myself and the ten member counties of the Eastern Washington Council of Governments.

Ecosystem-based function should not be an element of the US Entity recommendation to the Department of State. Currently Ecosystem-based function is listed as the first and primary element of a renegotiated treaty. It is also present in every aspect of the draft recommendation. The existing treaty does not include every dam on the Columbia River system. If Ecosystem function becomes the primary function, and it is currently listed first before hydropower and flood control without any mention that the order in which items are listed is not pertinent, then the ability exists for a renewed treaty to include all of the dams as well as all of the tributaries in the entire Columbia Basin. We should not allow for this massive expansion of the treaty as it would harm our citizens and our economy.

Ecosystem function has been a domestic issue, as has irrigation, in regards to the current treaty. It is vital that it remains a domestic issue. The ecosystem and salmon are important to all of us, but there are domestic provisions already existing to address these issues and they need not be elevated to an international agreement regarding some of the dams on the Columbia River. The primary purpose for building most of the dams included in the current treaty was for hydropower and flood control and we owe it to all of our constituents to not expand this meaningful purpose to include domestic special interests. The current recommendation also recommends increased water supply, but mentions instream uses first which are also ecosystem based, and leads one to question whether humans will be considered or fall behind all ecosystem and environmental needs.

The current draft recommendation from the US Entity to the Department of State has no consensus and lacks any meaningful participation. The entire Sovereign Review Team (SRT) is made up of tribal members and unelected bureaucrats, 15 tribal governments, 11 federal agencies and 4 state members, and not a single elected official. The Eastern Washington Council of Governments represents ten counties with local elected county commissioners making up the Council. We, along with several other elected county commissioners from around the State, have been trying to get our voices and the voices of the people we represent heard throughout this process to no avail as of yet. Federal Agencies have a requirement by law and several Presidential orders to coordinate their efforts with local elected officials to

protect the local customs, culture, and economic stability of the areas we represent. To date this has not occurred and the current draft recommendation has the potential to create great harm to our economies and to our local customs and culture. The recommendation also places the human element below the environment and salmon. This is unacceptable and against federal statute. County Commissioners, State Representatives, City Councils, and elected Public Utility District Commissioners have all been relegated to non-stakeholder status. The Eastern Washington Council of Governments was formed primarily to study and address issues regarding Lake Roosevelt and the Columbia River. As local electeds, we have the responsibility and duty to protect our citizens from human health hazards and the duty to protect our local economies, yet by being excluded from any meaningful input in the recommendation, our duties have been rebuffed by the SRT and the U.S. Entity. We believe that until the U.S. Entity has meaningful coordination with Local County electeds that the recommendation not to sent to the Department of State, or if already forwarded to the Department of State that the recommendation is returned back with instructions to include coordination with local elected officials.

The current draft recommendation makes no mention of the word "irrigation." This was a primary purpose for the construction of Grand Coulee Dam and much of the non-treaty infrastructure on the Columbia River System. This is an important element that should be considered in any future changes to the treaty. All of our local, state, and regional economies depend upon irrigation, and the electricity to run the irrigation systems, for food production. No nation in world history has ever been defeated when it has kept its ability to feed itself and its troops. Irrigation of the Columbia Basin from both treaty and non-treaty dams allows us to feed ourselves and the world. This is a national security issue, as well as a local economic issue, that must not be forgotten or ignored.

Climate Change, i.e. – Man-made Global Warming, is another recommendation made in the draft by the U.S. Entity. This is yet another attempt to place ecosystems above our constituents in any new treaty. The weather has changed constantly throughout the entire history of the treaty and will continue to do so. Flexibility exists in the current treaty to deal with changes in weather and we need not change the status quo.

Obviously with flood control provisions changing in 2024 and the Canadian entitlement payments putting a strain on our local economies, there are some changes that will need to be considered in the treaty. We, as local elected officials, agree and understand the need for some change, but we must continue to stay the course of the existing treaty with hydropower and flood control as the only primary purposes of any new or revised treaty; and any new or revised treaty must only include the dams currently within the existing treaty. Further, local electeds, and the interests of our constituents we have a duty to represent, must be brought to the table for meaningful input before any recommendation is made to the Department of State and/or any action is taken by the Department of State to negotiate change to a new treaty.

Thank you for allowing me to be heard today.