

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 19, 2024

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm,

We write to you to immediately halt any further implementation of the Columbia River Basin Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and commitments made by the United States Government (USG) in the final proposed stay in the Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) litigation made public one year ago.

The incoming administration should be allowed the time and opportunity to carefully review and shape the management of the Columbia River System, including the lower Snake River dams. The river system is the backbone of the Pacific Northwest, providing essential benefits to the region, including energy production, agricultural support, recreation, and transportation. We remain deeply concerned that key stakeholders from energy, agriculture, transportation, and other critical sectors have been consistently left out of the decision-making process regarding the future of the Federal Columbia River Power System, especially in regard to the dams on the lower Snake River. These industries, which are essential to the livelihoods of millions of people in the region, have had limited opportunities to fully voice their concerns or participate in discussions. This failure to engage with affected communities and industries not only undermines the principles of fair governance but also increases the risk for devastating economic and social consequences.

Specifically, we oppose efforts to reopen the 2020 CRSO Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) in the final days of this administration. The 2020 EIS process cost taxpayers \$55 million to conduct, was informed by substantial scientific data and over 450,000 public comments, and concluded that breaching the lower Snake River dams was not necessary and would jeopardize electric reliability in the region. It is our hope that future work in the region will value the input of all stakeholders and be based on a comprehensive, science-driven review of the facts—rather than predetermined political outcomes. Calling for duplicitous analysis on your way out the door would only indicate predisposition for dam breaching.

We recognize the importance of addressing concerns related to salmon and steelhead populations, and we are committed to seeking effective solutions that balance species conservation with the region's economic vitality. However, decisions regarding system operations must be made through a transparent, collaborative, science-based process that includes the input of all relevant stakeholders, not backroom deals and last-ditch efforts to signal interest in dam breaching. We remind you that Congress, and only Congress, can authorize the removal of Congressionally authorized dams in the region, and we have repeatedly signaled strong opposition to doing so.

We strongly urge halting further implementation of the MOU to guarantee the new administration has its opportunity to conduct a full, transparent examination that includes all relevant parties. Further, we strongly oppose any efforts to make last minute determinations about the future of the Columbia River System.

Sincerely,



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Cynthia M. Lummis
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator

CC:
White House Council on Environmental Quality
Bonneville Power Administration
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation