

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 4, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Granholm,

As members of the Northwest delegation, we write to express our deep concern about recent actions taken by this administration which have demonstrated a seeming disregard for scientific integrity. Specifically, we were appalled by the lack of transparency and obvious political intervention in processes regarding the recent release of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) draft “report” relating to the Columbia River Basin. Even more alarming, we have received further indication of political maneuvering by this administration to prevent information on the costs of replacing the power generated by the lower Snake River dams on the Federal Columbia River Power System from being made public prior to the release of the previously mentioned NOAA draft “report.”

While the Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) took four years to complete, included multiple comment periods, and cost over \$50 million and countless staff hours, the recent NOAA draft “report” appears to have been released without process, prior Congressional notification, or any triggering action. Even more troubling, the NOAA draft “report” cites plaintiffs in *National Wildlife Federation et al. v. National Marine Fisheries Service et al. [01-640]* as sources without referencing non-plaintiff co-managers. Given the extreme and potentially damaging nature of these actions, we request your response to the following questions related to the draft “report” titled *Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead* and the *BPA Lower Snake River Dams Power Replacement Study* no later than August 15, 2022:


1. When did Energy and Environmental Economics (E3) transmit its study to BPA?
2. Please outline the process by which this report moved through review and approval by federal agencies and entities before its public release.
3. Is it correct that the Northwest Power and Conservation Council members were scheduled to be briefed on the E3 Study on July 7, 2022?
4. Was the briefing rescheduled at the direction or influence of anyone outside of BPA? If so, who?
5. What was the reasoning behind rescheduling the briefing?

6. There were changes made to the E3 Study between the time an embargoed version was released to Congress on July 11, 2022, and when the report was made public on July 12, 2022.
 - a. Was there any direction external from E3 and BPA that led to these changes?
 - b. Was anyone external to E3 or BPA involved in the consideration of these changes?


The infrastructure on the Columbia River System provides invaluable benefits to the Pacific Northwest, including carbon-free energy, flood control mitigation, irrigation, navigation, and recreation benefits. Balancing these vital interests with species conservation is not an easy task. It is made significantly more difficult when science and collaboration is replaced by politically-motivated intervention.

The recent actions by this administration have sewn complete distrust in this administration's ability to lead with facts, science, and transparency regarding the Columbia River System. These actions will undoubtedly have long-term and damaging effects on this administration's ability to bring diverse stakeholders together to chart a path forward on species recovery and preservation of the vital benefits of the Columbia River System.

Sincerely,



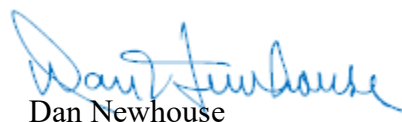
James E. Risch
United States Senator




Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress