

House Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security
Legislative Hearing
2123 Rayburn House Office Building
September 20, 2023
10:00 AM

Hearing Entitled, “*American Hydropower: Unleashing Reliable, Renewable, Clean Power Across the U.S.*”

Question from Congressman Fulcher for Chief of Staff, Matt Lee-Ashley, Council on Environmental Quality:

- 1.) What is CEQ’s involvement with the Lower Snake River Dams? I am concerned that CEQ is pushing a pre-determined outcome to breach the Lower Snake River Dams.
 - a. Is it true that CEQ has sought a pre-determined outcome when it comes to the operation of the Lower Snake River Dams to breach during the legal mediation process in connection with a court case related to the Lower Snake River Dams? I have heard that users that would be impacted if the dams were removed: Irrigation and other water users for example.

CEQ Response: The United States government has made a commitment to work with regional stakeholders to develop a long-term, durable solution to restore salmon and other native fish populations in the interior Columbia River Basin to healthy and abundant levels while honoring the federal government’s commitments to Tribal Nations, delivering affordable and reliable clean power, supporting local and regional economies, and meeting the many resilience needs of stakeholders across the region. CEQ has convened an interagency group that is working to meet this commitment and to resolve the longstanding litigation in federal court over the operation of the Columbia River System.

As a part of that effort, CEQ is participating with other key federal and non-federal stakeholders in a court-approved mediation process that is proceeding during a stay in the litigation. The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) is facilitating the mediation process.

This mediation process has no pre-determined outcome and the mediation is ongoing. It is worth noting, in particular, that only Congress could authorize the potential breaching of the Lower Snake River Dams. Therefore, any agreement arising from the mediation process could not—absent Congressional authorization—include an agreement to breach dams.