

## **Chair Jeff Duncan**

# **Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security: “Exposing President Biden’s Plan to Dismantle the Snake River Dams and the Negative Impacts to the United States.”**

**January 30, 2024**

*As prepared for delivery*

Thank you all for being here today and welcome to the Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Subcommittee hearing titled, “Exposing President Biden’s Plan to Dismantle the Snake River Dams and the Negative Impacts to the United States.”

Today we will examine the [Draft Mediated Agreement](#) recently released by the White House - U.S. Government Commitments in Support for the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative and in Partnership with the Six Sovereigns”.

This agreement was released on December 14, 2023 and followed a [Presidential Memorandum](#) issued by President Biden in September that directs Federal agencies to prioritize the restoration of “healthy and abundant” salmon, steelhead, and other native fish populations in the Columbia River Basin.

The Agreement was filed in the District Court in Oregon and set commitments made by the Federal Government. It was implemented through a “Memorandum of Understanding” between the United States; four tribes; and environmental non-profit organizations.

On the first panel today, we will hear from government stakeholders with various roles in managing the dams.

One of these is the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ), who was responsible for convening this secret and confidential mediation to develop the Draft Agreement that lays the groundwork for eventually breaching the Lower Snake River Dams.

On the second panel we will hear from stakeholders impacted by this agreement—many of whom had no input in this “secret” agreement.

This agreement was brokered without any input from the electric providers—those responsible for delivering reliable energy. It is important we hear from one of their representatives today...

Jim Matheson, the CEO of the Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), will testify about how the potential agreement would jeopardize electric reliability and increase the cost for millions of Americans throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Electric cooperatives operate in 48 states and are responsible to providing energy to millions of rural Americans.

Hydroelectric power generated by the Columbia River System is the backbone of the electric grid in the Pacific Northwest—it is the reason the lights stay on—this agreement jeopardizes This carbon-free resource.

Of course, the Lower Snake River Dams and the over three-thousand megawatts of electricity they provide, are critical to Chair Rodgers district, where hydropower accounts for nearly 70 percent of electricity generation; but hydropower is also critical for states and counties all over the county.

Hydropower is this nation's largest source of renewable energy... I am worried about the precedent this agreements sets.

For example, in my district, the third district of South Carolina, the Duke Energy Bad Creek Hydro Project is able to provide enough energy to power nearly 1 million homes.

Last summer I was able to host members of this Committee on a tour of this facility-it is an approximately 1,600 - megawatt battery that stores mainly renewable solar energy as well as excess nuclear baseload power that would otherwise be curtailed because it was generated during periods of low demand.

The Lake Hartwell Dam is an Army Corp managed dam and is part of the Savannah River System, which is critical to hydropower generation in South Carolina.

On the second panel, we will also hear about the agreement's impacts on agriculture and transportation in the region from Casy Chumrau (*CHUM-RAW*), CEO of the Washington Grain Commission and Neil Maunu (*MAO-NEW*), Executive Director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.

This Agreement represents ineffective governing and stripping the people of Chair Rodger's district of their right to be heard in the process.

Shutting out critical stakeholders will result in a disastrous outcome for the State.

Too many times we have seen this Administration kowtow to radical environmentalists, who rely on political objectives instead of science and facts. This creates policy that undercuts energy affordability and reliability and ends up having a negative environmental impact.

Look no further than the Biden Administration's decision to halt permits for new LNG export projects.

Special interests and big funded climate groups are running this Administration—not the American people.

I look forward to our hearing today and recognize Ranking Member DeGette for five minutes.