

The Honorable Russ Fulcher

- 1. As both a Washington Grain Commission CEO and a former Idaho Grain Commission Executive Director, can you offer your perspective on the lack of consultation by CEQ and relevant agencies in the Biden administration regarding the final deal that could negatively impact your growers and operators if the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative were implemented and a de-facto operational breaching of the dams were to occur?**
  - a. We have heard grain and related agriculture stakeholders had some early input, but then very little, if any, when it came to the terms of the mediation and the resulting stay on which it is based. Is that accurate and if so, please explain.**

It is accurate to state that agricultural stakeholders were largely left out of the consultation process. While our group was not specifically a party to the litigation, we were ready and willing to provide reliable data and farmer perspectives during every step of the process. We, along with our partners in the agricultural industry, stood ready to engage in USG-hosted listening sessions. However, the speaking slots for those sessions were open to the public and were overwhelmingly filled by activists sharing emotionally driven testimony. They were not structured to ensure all viewpoints were heard.

The lack of farmer perspectives included in the decision-making process is extremely problematic for the entirety of the U.S. agricultural economy, and particularly the PNW. Removal of the Lower Snake River Dams, or significant operational changes that eliminate barging, would negatively impact the price offered to farmers for their grain and simultaneously increase prices for customers, making PNW and U.S. wheat less competitive and sending ripples throughout the economy. By failing to meaningfully engage agricultural stakeholders, the negotiating parties lack understanding of the realities on the ground and how this deal will impact all stakeholders.

As I said in my testimony, the Columbia Snake River System is the top wheat export gateway in the nation, with more than 55 percent of all U.S. wheat exports moving through the PNW by barge or rail<sup>1</sup>. In addition, across the agriculture industry, the Columbia Snake River System is the second largest gateway for soybean and corn exports coming from as far as the Midwest, serving as an important channel to bring crop inputs, like potash, to farmers in the region who need fertilizer to produce the safe and affordable food supply that is found on every American's table. To that end, we stand ready to work with other stakeholders, the administration, and members of Congress to ensure a future in which dams and salmon coexist.

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<sup>1</sup> Facts about U.S. wheat exports and the Columbia Snake River system. U.S. Wheat Associates. (2022, March 28). <https://www.uswheat.org/wheatletter/facts-about-u-s-wheat-exports-and-the-columbia-snake-river-system/>