

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE  
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS  
LT. GOVERNOR

December 8, 2023

President Joe Biden  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I am concerned that the recently proposed settlement with the Nez Perce and other lower Columbia River Treaty tribes has negative, far-reaching implications for Montana residents and the economy of the entire northwest United States. This proposed settlement will impact the operations of federal dams located in the Columbia River system and thereby impact the Montana citizens that rely on these dams for reliable, low-cost electricity. Montanans simply cannot afford higher electricity rates.

I am frustrated that the negotiations for this settlement were carried out in secret. Both the states of Montana and Idaho, as well as the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) were locked out of these discussions and were not given a chance to defend their respective interests in the matter. This closed-door process excluded the State of Montana despite our long-term status as an intervenor-defendant supporting the federal government, public power interests, and BPA itself. It is impossible to have confidence that this proposed settlement reflects an honest balancing of the interests at stake here.

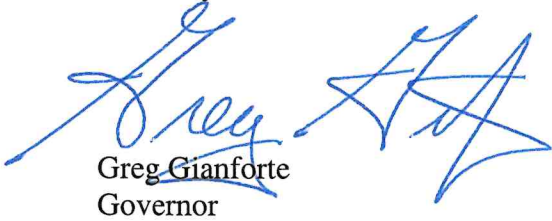
The result of this flawed negotiation process is a proposed settlement that will likely have significant negative economic impacts across the region. The operational changes in the settlement by the federal government entities will likely reduce electricity supply at a time when the region is facing ever increasing demand and reliability concerns. This almost guarantees that rates will rise for Montanans that purchase power from BPA. Over the long term, this settlement proposal could pave the way for breaching the Lower Snake River Dams (LSRD), which would be catastrophic for Montana electricity consumers and the agriculture industry in the northwest United States. The cost of replacing the clean, reliable electricity produced by these dams would be staggering, not to mention the loss of such a key shipping corridor for Montana agricultural products.

For these reasons, I request that your administration take the steps necessary to rescind this proposed settlement and reopen negotiations on these critical issues. The State of Montana has been heavily involved in the discussions surrounding salmon recovery and the operations of the

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federal dams in the Columbia River drainage for decades. It is unacceptable that Montana is locked out of decisions that will impact its citizens.

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte  
Governor