



December 1, 2023

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Secretary Granholm:

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (“NRECA”) and American Public Power Association (“APPA”) are alarmed by the Draft Mediated Agreement, entitled “U.S. Government Commitments in Support of the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative and in Partnership with the Six Sovereigns” (“Draft Agreement”) recently released by Congress. If this Agreement is ratified, it would jeopardize electric reliability and increase costs for millions of Americans throughout the Pacific Northwest.

The Draft Agreement clearly shows that the Administration’s goal is dam breaching, a conclusion that runs counter to decades of studies, science, and governmental actions, and an outcome that would destabilize the economy of an entire region of the nation. Not only does this expose a severe lack of understanding about the importance of keeping the lights on, it also reveals a misplaced desire to undermine our nation’s essential emissions-free hydropower system without considering the cost.

The Draft Agreement would weaken the Administration’s stated greenhouse gas reduction goals by undermining hydropower, an always available, emissions-free source of electric generation critical to grid stability. As our nation depends on electricity to power more of the economy, we need more generating resources – not fewer. This proposal flies in the face of common sense and would make hydroelectric operations unnecessarily costly and unstable. BPA’s hydropower system forms the backbone of reliability in the region. Communities across the West, including those in rural America, many of which are located in persistent poverty counties, would suffer the brunt of these impacts.

In addition to the severely questionable obligations of the Draft Agreement, NRECA and APPA also have significant concerns about the lack of transparency inherent in this Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) mediation, as well as the Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ) Request for Information on the management of the CRSO (Docket No: CEQ-2023-0002). This process has shut critical stakeholders and parties out of this Agreement and the administrative process. It has deprived our members in the Northwest, intimate stakeholders in CRSO operations, and millions of their customers of having fair representation in these proceedings.

We strongly oppose the ratification of the Draft Agreement. The reliability of the Western electric grid is critical to continued national security, stability of our domestic food and mineral supplies, national economic stability, and our nation’s energy security. Reliability should be prioritized as the U.S. Government moves forward in assessing the legality and appropriateness of these proposed obligations.

Moreover, the Administration should engage in an open and transparent process with our members, all CRSO stakeholders, and Congress to address our concerns going forward.

Respectfully,



Jim Matheson
CEO
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association



Scott Corwin
CEO
American Public Power Association

Cc. John Podesta, Senior Advisor to the President of the United States
The Honorable Deb Haaland
The Honorable Tom Vilsack
The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
The Honorable Michael Connor
The Honorable Brenda Mallory

Washington Congressional Delegation
Idaho Congressional Delegation
Montana Congressional Delegation
Oregon Congressional Delegation