

August 29, 2025

The Honorable Harriet Hageman, Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

*Transmitted via email ([Kirby.struhar@mail.house.gov](mailto:Kirby.struhar@mail.house.gov))*

Dear Chairwoman Hageman and Members of the Subcommittee,

On behalf of the Port of Benton, we write to express strong support for H.R. 2073, the Defending our Dams Act, introduced by Congressman Dan Newhouse. This legislation represents a powerful commitment from the federal government to protect our Lower Snake River Dams (LSRDs) from the threat of breach.

As a local government and a semi-rural port district located in Tri-Cities in Eastern Washington, we own and operate infrastructure that is critical to employers, manufacturers, and agricultural producers. Specifically, industrial parks, 16 miles of short line railroads, and properties that are directly tied or adjacent to the Columbia-Snake River System. Our partners rely on this system to move wheat, potatoes, and advanced manufactured goods to global markets.

As a public port district, we drive economic development and not only advocate but support job creation. Ensuring efficiency and competitive barge transportation keeps thousands of trucks off local highways and ultimately helps our local family farms continue to thrive. Breaching the dams would not only devastate our Eastern Washington economy but our own community and state energy goals. In short, it would undermine our role in global supply chains.

The Lower Snake River Dams (LSRDs) are vital to the Pacific Northwest's economy. As part of the Columbia-Snake River System, they form a marine highway that enables the transport of billions of dollars in cargo to global markets and supports thousands of jobs. This system is the nation's top wheat export gateway and the third-largest grain export corridor in the world—feeding populations abroad while sustaining local communities.

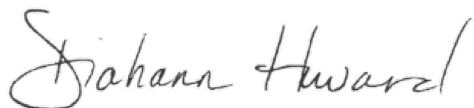
Despite these benefits, as well as those of clean hydropower production and irrigating over 70,000 acres of high-yield farmland, the future of the LSRDs is under threat. The Biden Administration took steps toward breaching the dams, citing the need to restore wild salmon and steelhead populations in

the Columbia River Basin to “healthy and abundant” levels. However, data shows that adult salmon returns have more than doubled since the first dam was built in 1938 because LSRD fish passage survival rates consistently exceed Endangered Species Act standards. NOAA supported Biden’s policy shift by publishing a flawed, unauthored report, and the federal government subsequently signed a memorandum of agreement with the Six Sovereigns, paving the way for dam removal.

We appreciate President Trump’s June 12th action to withdraw from the memorandum and rescind the Notice of Intent for a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Columbia River System of Operations. The Defending Our Dams Act builds on this momentum and offers a path to lasting protection of the LSRDs.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Diahann Howard, PPM®, PPX®  
Executive Director

CC:Christopher.macarthur@mail.house.gov  
Office of Rep. Dan Newhouse