Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 14, 2015

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write to follow up on our April 15, 2014 letter regarding the future of the 1964 Columbia River Treaty (Treaty), and to express consternation with how the process has unfolded thus far. As you may recall, we asked you to make consideration of this issue a priority in our last letter, as this issue is of paramount importance to the entire Pacific Northwest. Now that the Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) has reviewed and analyzed the "Regional Recommendation for the Future of the Columbia River Treaty after 2024" (Recommendation), the United States government must come to an agreement on the parameters for negotiations with Canada. Given the 2024 deadline for certain aspects of the Treaty, we stress the importance of concluding the IPC process and urge you to initiate negotiations with Canada in 2015.

Treaty modernization and negotiations with Canada directly affect the economy, environment, and flood control needs of communities we represent in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana along over 1,200 miles of the Columbia River and its tributaries. The Columbia River Treaty has provided benefits to communities in the Columbia River basin on both sides of the border for over fifty years, particularly as the United States and Canada worked together to manage water storage capabilities, flood control, and power generation. However, we have now reached a critical juncture at which point either the United States or Canada can initiate significant changes to the Treaty, even including termination, with ten years notice to the other country. We also understand that while certain provisions related to flood control automatically expire in 2024, the majority of the Treaty's provisions, including the outdated formula by which the United States compensates Canada for power coordination benefits, would continue indefinitely without action.

We know that your Administration, including staff from the National Security Council, the Council on Environmental Quality, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Departments of State, Energy, the Interior, Commerce, and others have been working through the IPC to digest and analyze the details of the Recommendation since it was submitted on December 13, 2013 by the designated "U.S. Entity" – jointly the Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This Recommendation outlines nine principles for a modernized Treaty, and reflects a multi-year effort to achieve regional consensus on complex river management issues among a diverse group of stakeholders throughout the Pacific Northwest. We appreciate the work that has been done by the IPC to understand the Recommendation, and we are united in the

belief that the Recommendation should be the basis for ensuring that cross-border management of the Columbia River better reflects the interests of the Pacific Northwest and the nation.

We recognize the magnitude of the Recommendation, but the Sovereign Review Team's work in the region yielded a consensus document that took into account the concerns of tribal nations, agricultural groups, power producers, environmental organizations, and users of the river for navigational and recreational purposes. Now that the IPC has reviewed the Recommendation, it is time for the United States government to finalize a negotiating approach and formally engage Canada.

We remain concerned about the pace of the IPC process, and the prioritization this matter is receiving within your Administration and the Department of State. To better understand the IPC process, and in response to questions from our constituents, we request a timeline for completing the IPC process and beginning negotiations with Canada in 2015, including mid-term deadlines and a schedule for conducting regular Congressional briefings to keep us apprised of your progress. Please also provide details on the decision making process for coming to a final resolution when IPC member positions might be in conflict or consensus cannot be reached.

While we understand that many agencies are involved in the current process, we are hopeful that internal debate can be brought to an expeditious conclusion so the negotiation process can begin with Canada this year. We appreciate the willingness of agencies to remain in contact with the Pacific Northwest Congressional Delegation, and ask that your Administration provide our staffs a briefing in April 2015 on your progress. We also continue to encourage your Administration to be open to input from and engagement with concerned regional stakeholders, many of whom have valuable expertise in managing the Columbia River and played key roles in developing the Recommendation.

The Columbia River plays a critical role in the economy and culture of each of our states, and potential management changes initiated through the Treaty could have major impacts far into the future. We thank you for your consideration of our requests and we look forward to continued engagement with you on this issue of vital importance to our constituents.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray
United States Senator

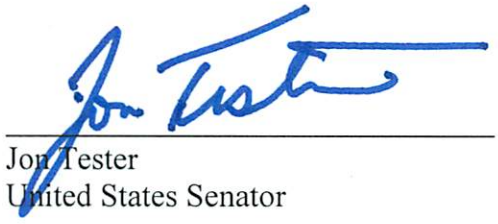
Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Greg Walden
Member of Congress

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Jon Tester
United States Senator

Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

Steve Daines
United States Senator

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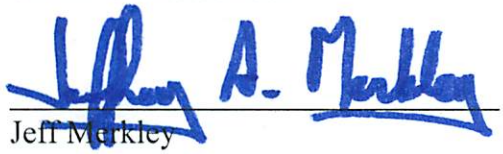
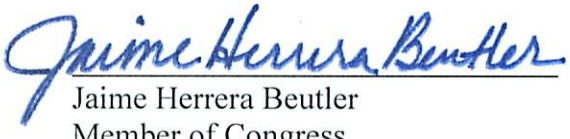


Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Ryan Zinke
Member of Congress

Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Jaime Herrera Beutler
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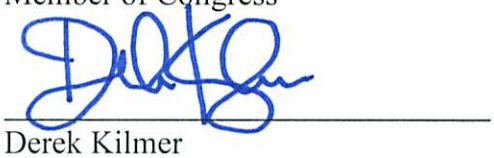
James Risch
United States Senator



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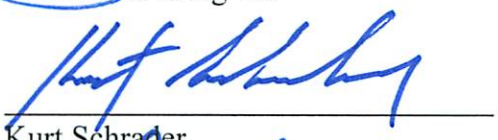
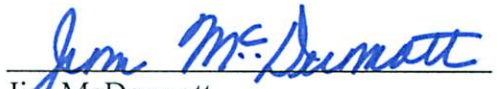


Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
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Adam Smith
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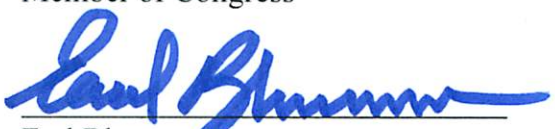

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
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Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable John Kerry, Secretary, U.S. Department of State
Mr. Brian Harris, Director for North American Affairs, National Security Council
Ms. Christy Goldfuss, Managing Director, Council on Environmental Quality
The Honorable Ernest Moniz, Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy
The Honorable Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy
The Honorable Elliot Mainzer, Administrator, Bonneville Power Administration
The Honorable John McHugh, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Army
The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), U.S. Department of the Army
Brigadier General John Kem, Commander, Northwest Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
The Honorable Michael Connor, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
The Honorable Penny Pritzker, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
The Honorable Kathryn Sullivan, Administrator, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration