



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAY 20 2015

Dear Senator Murray:

Thank you for your letter of April 14 to President Obama regarding the 1964 Columbia River Treaty. We have been asked to respond on behalf of the President. The Administration recognizes the significant economic and cultural role the Columbia River plays in the lives of your constituents in the Pacific Northwest, including numerous communities in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. We assure you that the future of the Treaty is a priority, and internal deliberations are gaining momentum.

The Administration has reviewed and analyzed the “Regional Recommendation for the Future of the Columbia River Treaty after 2024,” and we agree the Recommendation is an extremely useful document. To proceed with negotiations with Canada on issues as complex and multifaceted as those involved in managing the Columbia River and its tributaries, we are working to ensure that our negotiating position is one that maximizes benefits to the United States. We have met with stakeholder constituents from the region throughout the process, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Based on the Recommendation, we have decided to include flood risk mitigation, ecosystem-based function, and hydropower generation interests in the draft U.S. negotiating position. We hope to approach Canada soon to begin discussions on modernization of the Treaty.

Thank you for the opportunity for the State Department and the Council on Environmental Quality to brief the region’s Senate staff on the status of our internal deliberations on the Columbia River Treaty modernization on February 27 and May 5. We look forward to providing a similar briefing for the region’s House staff on May 27 and to working together to modernize the U.S.-Canada Columbia River Treaty for the benefit of the people of the Pacific Northwest.

The Honorable  
Patty Murray,  
United States Senate.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us on this or any other matter.

Sincerely,



Julia Frifield  
Assistant Secretary  
Legislative Affairs