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**50th Anniversary of the Columbia River Treaty**

*Columbia River Treaty Power Group: It’s time to determine future of the treaty and*

*US government must ensure region shares in the treaty’s benefits*

PORTLAND - On the 50th Anniversary of the Columbia River Treaty, a group of 88 electric utilities and industry associations representing 6.4 million Northwest electric customers is renewing its call to the Obama Administration to begin Columbia River Treaty talks with Canada in 2014 and to use the Regional Recommendation as a basis for treaty talks.

September 16th marks the 50th Anniversary of the Columbia River Treaty and is the first opportunity for either country to seek significant changes to the Treaty.

“The Power Group appreciates the efforts of the Administration and leadership of our Congressional delegation,” said Steve Klein, CEO of Snohomish County PUD. “The Columbia River Treaty is very important to our region’s economy – from our large employers to individual customers. It matters to everyone’s monthly electric bill. The time has come to determine the Treaty’s future and we urge the Administration to launch Treaty talks with Canada this year.”

Scott Corwin, executive director, Public Power Council, adds “Any future Treaty must ensure that Northwest electric ratepayers are treated fairly. Currently, according to the U.S. government, Canada receives vastly more value from Treaty operations. Our region’s highest Treaty priority must be to address this inequity.”

The current treaty uses an outdated 50 year old formula for calculating the Treaty’s power benefits or payments to Canada. The formula relies on assumptions that do not reflect current Columbia River Treaty operations. This payment, known as the “Canadian Entitlement” is estimated to cost Northwest electric ratepayers 70 to 90 percent more than it should.

“Northwest electric ratepayers send power worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Canada annually without receiving equal benefits in return,” said Bill Gaines, director and CEO of Tacoma Public Utilities. “If the Treaty’s hydropower benefits were equitably shared between our two countries, more carbon-free, renewable hydropower would be put to use to benefit U.S. ratepayers and our economy.”

In 2013, after a three-year stakeholder input process in the Northwest, the U.S. Entity led by the Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued the Regional Recommendation for the Future of the Columbia River Treaty.

The Regional Recommendation says the “Canadian Entitlement” should be reduced and calls for a decision in 2014 to proceed with treaty talks with Canada and to complete that process no later than 2015. The Power Group believes the Regional Recommendation should serve as the basis for treaty talks between the United States and Canada.

Last April, the 26-member Northwest Congressional Delegation sent a letter to President Obama supporting the Regional Recommendation call to address current treaty inequities that impact more than 6.4 million electric ratepayers in the Northwest.

Termination of the treaty is one option if Canada refuses to share treaty benefits more equitably with the American people. A termination notice to Canada would trigger a renegotiation of several outdated aspects of the treaty. The Power Group encourages the United States and Canada to launch Columbia River Treaty talks and to agree to a more equitable sharing of benefits under the treaty.

In addition, the Power Group maintains that a modernized Columbia River Treaty should maintain flood risk management that’s similar to current levels. Any proposals to alter flood control protection practices should be carefully considered, authorized by the Congress, with an eye toward protecting life and property. Furthermore, Northwest electric ratepayers should not be expected to bear flood control protection costs. Funding for flood risk management should be consistent with national policies of funding through the federal budget.

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*The Columbia River Treaty Power Group provides a forum for electric utilities, industry associations, and other entities representing an estimated 6.4 million electric ratepayers of the Northwest that depend on the Columbia River for power, flood control, navigation and other benefits.*