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COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN PUBLIC HEARING
NORTHWEST POWER AND CONSERVATION COUNCIL

TRANSCRIPT OF
COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN
PUBLIC HEARING

HELD ON
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026
4:10 P.M.

BOISE, IDAHO

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1 APPEARANCES

2
3 Ed Schriever, Chairman, Fish and Wildlife Committee

4 Les Purce, Washington State Council Member

5 Mike Milburn, Montana State Council Member

6 K.C. Golden, Washington State Council Member

7 Jeffery Allen, Idaho State Council Member

8
9 PUBLIC COMMENTERS:

10 Devin Fielding

11 Justin Hayes

12 Jim Yost

13 Lucile King Scopinich

14 Tom Stewart

15 Pat Ford

16 Robert Ferguson

17 Stephen Boorman

18 Sally Cavazos

19 Tori O'Neal

20 Jack Hurty

21 Stephen Pfeiffer

22 Kelly Richmond

23 Edwina Allen

24 Corinne Heley

25 Luke Schaefer

APPEARANCES CONTINUED

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- Asa Partin
- Paul Arrington
- Jessica Matlock
- Todd Ungerecht
- Candice Partin
- Ella Jenveja
- Lilly Wilson
- Rachel Brinkley
- Jennifer James
- Will Hart

1 engagement. And I hope that you can recognize this
2 afternoon's meeting as practicing what that law
3 preaches and -- and us being here to listen to you
4 all. So thank you for taking your time.

5 We'll explain run of show. We have a
6 short presentation that will lead off before we go,
7 but first, I would just ask my fellow councilmembers
8 to go down the line.

9 MR. PURCE: My name is Les Purce. I'm a
10 councilmember from the State of Washington.

11 MR. MILBURN: And I'm Mike -- Mike
12 Milburn, councilmember from Montana.

13 MR. GOLDEN: I'm K.C. Golden -- K.C.
14 Golden, the other councilmember from Washington.

15 MR. ALLEN: I'm Jeff Allen, Idaho
16 councilmember, and I can't think of a better way to
17 celebrate Abraham Lincoln's birthday than to sit
18 with a civil group of my friends and discuss a -- a
19 somewhat contentious issue.

20 MR. MILBURN: Always the history buff.

21 MR. SCHRIEVER: So I notice -- we're
22 starting a few minutes late, but I did notice there
23 was a lull in folks coming through the door, so I
24 just thought it a good time. If you have come in
25 the room, your avenue to testify this afternoon,

1 this evening, is by signing onto a sheet. If you
2 have not done that, it will be very difficult, if
3 not impossible, for me to recognize your wishes to
4 be called to the -- the dais, so if you wish to and
5 you haven't signed up, there are sheets in the back
6 of the room for you to forward your name up here so
7 we can call on you.

8 Probably as the first order of business,
9 put my reading glasses on for the official record.
10 Under the Northwest Power Act, the Northwest Power
11 and Conservation Council adopts and periodically
12 amends a program to protect, mitigate, and enhance
13 fish and wildlife affected by the development and
14 operation of the hydroelectric facilities on the
15 Columbia River and its tributaries. The current
16 version of the program is the 2014 Columbia River
17 Basin Fish and Wildlife Program with a 2020
18 addendum.

19 The Council is in the process of amending
20 this Fish and Wildlife Program in a formal amendment
21 process under the Act. We recently released a draft
22 of the 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program. The Council
23 is now at the stage of amending -- of the amendment
24 process where we are receiving public comment on the
25 draft Fish and Wildlife Program. The formal comment

1 period extends until March 2nd, 2026. The Council
2 is conducting public hearings like this one to
3 receive oral comments on the draft. We have a court
4 reporter in attendance to report your comments. The
5 transcript of this hearing will be circulated to all
6 council members and staff, and will be included in
7 the administrative record for this program amendment
8 process.

9 The Council is also accepting written
10 comments on the draft Fish and Wildlife Program
11 until March 2nd, 2026. Instructions for how to
12 comment in writing are on the Council's website.
13 You can also ask any of our staff in the room
14 tonight.

15 The Council will consider all the oral and
16 written comments on the draft program when making a
17 final decision on the 2026 Fish and Wildlife
18 Program. The Council is expecting to make a
19 decision on the final program in May of this year.

20 So a little housekeeping, restrooms are
21 straight across the hall. Drinking fountain out
22 there as well.

23 I will tell just a very short story,
24 because I do have some history in this building.
25 When -- when the Fish and Wildlife Foundation built

1 this in partnership with the Fish and Game
2 Department, we increased the size of the footprint
3 of the building a little bit and it mandated that a
4 few trees be removed, and we repurposed those trees.
5 The sweetgum trees from out back of the building
6 were turned into meeting room tables. They're
7 lovely if you ever get a chance to be in the second
8 floor of the building to sit at those very large
9 sweetgum river tables, epoxy river tables.

10 The wainscotting in this room were -- were
11 milled from other trees that were removed. And
12 there was a little bit of sweetgum leftover, and I
13 took it home and built the dais that you will speak
14 at tonight. And it was my first experience -- not
15 my first experience with carpentry, but with live
16 edge, and I had to join the live edge pieces that
17 are on the side of the dais, and I did so with
18 cherry. Remembering George Washington, who chopped
19 down the cherry tree and could not tell a lie, I
20 thought, what a fitting wood to put into the dais,
21 so remember, when you come and speak here, you
22 cannot tell a lie. It's adorned with cherry.

23 So you're all going -- I'm -- I'm
24 impressed. I -- I think we're at five pages, but
25 many of you have chosen not to provide testimony,

1 and that's fine. You're here to listen. We're
2 going to ask you to keep your comments to three
3 minutes. We're going to accept written comments.
4 We -- we love to get written comments to facilitate
5 your oral comments. But we have a timekeeper.
6 Member Golden has agreed to try the green light,
7 yellow light --

8 MR. GOLDEN: 30 seconds, Ed.

9 MR. SCHRIEVER: -- red light. So as
10 you're speaking, you will see the -- the light in
11 front of K.C., and it will be green for two and a
12 half minutes, then it will be yellow for 30 seconds,
13 and then when it turns red, we will ask you to end
14 your comments and let the next person come up.

15 I'll call a couple of names and we have
16 the on-deck circle up here. And just to facilitate
17 smooth movement of people tonight, when I call you
18 to the on-deck circle, you can come up and sit at
19 the table so you have ready access to the dais when
20 it's cleared from the next person in front of you.

21 Most of our meetings represent people with
22 diversities of opinions and even polarizations of
23 positions, and that's what we're here to listen to,
24 if it exists. Just right up front, we just expect
25 everybody to be cordial, civil, and polite. And I

1 would ask for no applause nor heckling nor boos nor
2 yeas. It is -- it is Lincoln's birthday.

3 Patty, you have a short presentation for
4 us?

5 MS. O'TOOLE: I do.

6 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you.

7 MS. O'TOOLE: All right. Okay. Well,
8 good evening, everyone, and thanks for being here.
9 Afternoon, evening. We're on the edge. My name is
10 Patty O'Toole, and I am the Council's Fish and
11 Wildlife division director, and I'm going to just
12 give a few slides. Kind of helps everybody get
13 warmed up. Loosen up a little bit. And then when
14 I'm done, we'll flip this around, and so when you
15 provide your comments, you can be talking directly
16 to our council members.

17 So thank you, Chair Schriever, and all the
18 council members for coming. And we will get
19 started.

20 So a little bit about who we are. We're
21 an unusual group. The Northwest Power Conservation
22 Council was authorized by Congress through the
23 Northwest Power Act in 1980 to give the region a
24 bigger voice, a greater voice, in planning for
25 energy and fish and wildlife. The governors of

1 Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington each appoint
2 two councilmembers, and we're lucky to have five of
3 us this evening.

4 The Act requires that the interstate
5 council develops, with broad public participation, a
6 regional power plan and a Columbia River Fish and
7 Wildlife Program. And the federal agencies that
8 operate the Columbia River hydropower electric
9 facilities also have legal responsibilities under
10 the Northwest Power Act.

11 So some of the things we do. We develop a
12 power plan through an extensive public process.
13 Similar to this, just following on its heels. It
14 will be a 20-year power plan to ensure -- and these
15 -- these words are bolded on -- on the screen on
16 purpose, and adequate, efficient, economical, and
17 reliable power supply. Congress told us we needed
18 to do that, so we do. And it includes load
19 forecasting and analysis of available generating
20 resources and energy efficiency, and it guides
21 Bonneville's acquisition of cost-effective
22 conservation and generating resources.

23 That plan is reviewed every five years,
24 and it's just getting underway. And about the time
25 that Council's Fish and Wildlife plan is wrapped up,

1 we will be well into the power plan, and there'll be
2 further opportunities for events like this, and we
3 look forward to hearing from you at those as well.

4 With the Fish and Wildlife Program, we
5 develop, again through extensive public process, a
6 program to protect, to mitigate, and enhance. Those
7 are the words bolded on the screen. That's what the
8 Act told us to do. The fish and wildlife that are
9 affected by the hydropower system.

10 You won't see the word "recovery" happen
11 very much in these types of presentations, and you
12 don't see it in the Act. The Act -- and the
13 Congress did not give us the same standards as it
14 gives in other acts, like the Endangered Species
15 Act, to recover and to meet recovery standards. Our
16 standards are to protect, mitigate, and enhance.

17 Oh, that didn't work. I apologize. Oh,
18 that's better.

19 This is all hydropower. Not only federal
20 hydropower, but other hydropower dams in the region
21 as well, and all fish and wildlife affected by
22 hydropower, and not just endangered species, not
23 just salmon and steelhead, although salmon and
24 steelhead do have special significance. We also
25 deal with resident fish and wildlife and nonlisted

1 salmon.

2 We also update our plan about every five
3 years, based primarily on the recommendations from
4 state and federal and fish and wildlife agencies,
5 tribes, and others. And we have a large group of
6 those people we work with. We work with four
7 states, two federal agencies, and more than 15
8 different tribes and tribal coalitions.

9 The program includes both onsite, or
10 things happening right in the river at the hydro
11 dams themselves, things like flow and passage, as
12 well as offsite mitigation, things like habitat
13 restoration and artificial production.

14 A little bit more about the Council's
15 program. There's been a significant amount of
16 growth and evolution since the very first plan in
17 1982. And the -- the fact that it has grown through
18 that time and evolved incrementally has really been
19 significant and helped minimize the impacts to the
20 electricity grid and the ratepayers of the Pacific
21 Northwest while still protecting, mitigating, and
22 enhancing fish and wildlife affected by the
23 hydropower system.

24 It's been a steady and dependable program.
25 It's been durable through decades-long history,

1 growing, and really comprehensively addressing all
2 parts of fish and wildlife and their habitats, from
3 the headwaters down to the estuary, and even
4 learning things about the ocean. It addresses all
5 stages of the life cycles of all the fish and
6 wildlife.

7 We have been seeing progress. There are
8 certain areas of the program that are really
9 starting to reap the benefits. We've had some real
10 good successes, fall chinook in the Snake, for
11 example. We've also done a lot of work with
12 sturgeon and lamprey and burbot, and our wildlife
13 program has really accomplished a good chunk of its
14 objective.

15 We know there's still more work to do.
16 Not all fish populations are in great shape, and we
17 understand that and we try to address some of those
18 things in this program.

19 Major accomplishments. We have, over the
20 last 40 years, developed fish flow and passage
21 measures at the dams to aid adult and juvenile
22 survival. We have a large habitat program
23 protecting and restoring many hundreds of thousands
24 of acres of habitat all up and down the basin. We
25 also have protected 44,000 stream miles of Northwest

1 rivers from future hydropower development.

2 We have used artificial production to
3 support conservation programs and harvest programs.
4 We also have a lot of fish streams out in our rural
5 areas where we have agriculture and irrigation to
6 protect fish out in those areas. And we've
7 purchased and protected over 500 parcels of property
8 for wildlife mitigation. A lot of good stuff
9 happening.

10 Okay. Something going wrong there.
11 Apologize.

12 A little bit on the -- on the program
13 process itself, and then I'll wrap up. This is our
14 timeline. It just shows you some of the different
15 steps we go through. The steps of how we amend this
16 program are very scripted by the statute, the
17 Northwest Power Act. We started this work at the
18 beginning of 2025, and here we are, partway through
19 development, listening to public comment, taking
20 those things in. Again, March 2nd is our deadline
21 for public comment, and we are hoping to adopt a
22 final program in May.

23 Some near-term priorities you read about
24 in the draft include protecting investments that
25 we've made over time, making sure that inflation and

1 -- and maintaining those facilities, the hatcheries,
2 the land, that the different types of facilities
3 that exist on the landscape are protected.

4 Doing what we can do with hydro
5 operations. Keep water moving through the system to
6 move fish towards the ocean, which often correlates
7 with higher survival. Working on predator
8 management. That's been a -- a big -- I'd say in
9 the last 15 years, that's been a big area of growth
10 in the program in addressing mammal predators, avian
11 -- or bird predators, as well as fish predators.

12 We also call out the importance of keeping
13 the habitat program going. We don't want to take
14 our foot off the gas. It's been a real boon to
15 these populations. Apologize. Okay. Good.

16 Public comment. Please sign up on the
17 sheets. I think the chair went over the room
18 logistics. Look for us, the staff, if you need
19 anything. We have little things around our necks.
20 Again, please be courteous to everyone, each other,
21 and to all of us. Please stay brief and on topic.
22 If you brought a written copy, after you get a
23 chance to state them into the record, you could set
24 them on the table over there. There's a yellow
25 envelope right next to Wendy, and you can set them

1 there and we'll make sure we take those in.

2 And you can, of course, go to our website.

3 We have some of these QR codes around the room, and

4 you'll be able to reach -- reach us that way. Lots

5 of opportunities, ways to get your comment in. We

6 even have some pieces of paper in the back for if

7 you just want to write down some notes. We'll take

8 them back with us and make sure they get into the

9 record that way. So there's many ways to

10 participate through this process. I think that's

11 it. I think we want to hear from you. So I am

12 going to try to turn this around so that we can

13 start hearing from you all. Thank you. All right.

14 MR. SCHRIEVER: So I'll call three people.

15 One's going to come right to the dais. The other

16 two people can be on deck, unless you're in a

17 comfortable place in the room and you can easily get

18 to the dais.

19 I have done math to the best of my

20 capabilities, and I've determined there are enough

21 people signed up to provide 75 minutes of testimony

22 if you all stay true to your 3-minute limit, so

23 we're -- we're looking pretty good for our two-hour

24 meeting so far.

25 And we'll ask you when you come to the

1 dais to state your name, and I know it sounds
2 redundant, but also please spell your name so the
3 court reporter can get it accurately into the
4 record. I know it's easy to forget. You come up,
5 you're all amped up, you got stuff you want to tell
6 us, but just take a second, state your name, and
7 then spell it so that we can get you recorded
8 accurately.

9 First up is Devin Fielding, then Justin
10 Hayes, then Jim Yost.

11 MR. DEVIN FIELDING: Good afternoon. My
12 name is Devin Fielding, representing the Idaho
13 Association of Soil Conservation Districts. D-E-V-
14 I-N F-I-E-L-D-I-N-G.

15 Good afternoon, councilmembers. I'm a
16 farmer from Shelley. It's just south of Idaho
17 Falls. And I also serve on the board of Idaho
18 Association of Soil Conservation Districts. Through
19 my work in agriculture and my involvement with
20 districts across the state, I see how conservation
21 programs function at the local level and how
22 critical locally led implementation is to their
23 success.

24 I'm here today to emphasize that soil and
25 water conservation districts are essential to the

1 success of the Fish and Wildlife Program. The
2 Columbia -- Columbia River system's vast and
3 complex. Many drivers affecting the ESA-listed fish
4 occur far downstream from headwater and agricultural
5 communities in Idaho. Local producers have little
6 influence over ocean survival, mainstream passage,
7 or basin-wide conditions. Yet despite those limits,
8 Idaho has seen meaningful improvements in habitat
9 and watershed function in ESA headwater areas.

10 That progress is not accidental. It is a
11 result of a locally led model that works through
12 conservation districts. Districts serve as the
13 bridge between regional policy goals and on-the-
14 ground action. Particularly on private lands, where
15 -- where a significant portion or the critical
16 habitat exists. Their trusted relationships,
17 technical expertise, and ability to leverage local,
18 state, and federal resources make them a cost-
19 effective and results-driven mechanism for achieving
20 habitat improvements at scale and maximizing the
21 value of ratepayer investments.

22 In addition to biological outcomes,
23 locally-implemented habitat projects often produce
24 broader community benefits, including improved
25 infrastructure resilience, reduced flood risk, and

1 more resilient working landscapes. As the Council
2 considers the habitat restoration and protection
3 measures outlined in the draft program, including
4 the priority product -- project approaches
5 referenced on page 70, we encourage continued
6 expansion of the project into additional watersheds
7 and stronger inclusion of local implantation
8 partners, including soil conservation districts.

9 A more inclusive process that incorporates
10 input from a broader ranges of sub-basins and
11 partners will strengthen regional outcomes. A
12 locally led model produces durable results because
13 projects are supported, maintained, and adapted over
14 time by the people who live and work on the land.
15 Strong regional goals depend on strong local
16 delivery systems. Idaho's experience shows that
17 when conservation is built from the local level up,
18 participation increases and measurable improvements
19 follow.

20 Thank you so much for the opportunity to
21 talk.

22 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Devin.

23 Justin Hayes, Jim Yost, and then Lucy -- I
24 can't read your last name. Lucy's third.

25 Welcome, Justin.

1 MR. JUSTIN HAYES: Thank you. I'm Justin
2 Hayes. That's J-U-S-T-I-N H-A-Y-E-S. I am the
3 conversation director for the Northern Rockies
4 office of American Rivers. I'd like to thank you
5 very much for traveling to Idaho and allowing the
6 public to interact with you and give you guys this
7 testimony.

8 This program is the region's primary
9 statutory framework under the Northwest Power Act
10 for protecting, mitigating, and enhancing fish and
11 wildlife affected by the Snake and Columbia River
12 dams. Because of the statutory role, the final
13 program needs to include specific operational and
14 accountable measures that can deliver real,
15 biological improvement, not just general policy
16 direction.

17 I really appreciated the story of this
18 podium, and I can feel the power of the cherry wood
19 in it, and as I do, I also looked to my right here,
20 and I see an Idaho Sockeye, and that is a poignant
21 reminder of the decline of sockeye and other salmon
22 species in Idaho. They are on the brink of
23 extinction, and serious work needs to be done across
24 the basin to assure their continued survival and
25 enhancement.

1 16 stocks above Bonneville. Four of them
2 are already extinct. Idaho wild fish remain in
3 serious decline. The Council's own analysis
4 continues to show the hydro system is responsible
5 for millions of fish losses annually, and this just
6 underscores the strong need for operational measures
7 now, not in the future. If we want more fish, we
8 need to take these actions very seriously.

9 The Council has retained the five million
10 returning adult salmon and steelhead goal. I
11 support that strongly. But that goal is only
12 meaningful if the program includes the measures
13 capable of -- of achieving it within the next 5 to
14 10 years.

15 The Northwest Power Planning Act requires
16 the Council to defer the recommendations to state
17 and tribal fish and wildlife managers unnecessary
18 recovery measures. And thus, the final program
19 should fully incorporate those recommendations,
20 particularly where they relate to hydro system
21 operations.

22 Measures in the program need to be
23 actionable, timebound, measurable, and tied to
24 biological outcomes. The final program should
25 explicitly include elevated spill through August

1 31st as a priority hydro power operations measure.
2 This is one of the most practical and immediately
3 available survival improvements for out migrating
4 juvenile salmon and steelhead. Late-season
5 migrating juveniles, especially wild fish, account
6 for a disproportionately important share of
7 returning adult salmon and steelhead. This measure
8 has been repeatedly recommended by -- by state and
9 tribal fisheries managers, and I urge the Council to
10 -- to include it in the program.

11 The program should also recognize that
12 lower state river dam removal is a necessary
13 recovery measure supported by the best available
14 science and must be evaluated and planned for. The
15 scientific record shows that this action would
16 produce the largest single survival improvement
17 available for Snake River salmon and Steelhead.

18 MR. SCHRIEVER: Justin, can you wind it
19 up, please?

20 MR. JUSTIN HAYES: We will be submitting
21 additional written testimony. Thank you very much.

22 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you.

23 Mr. Yost?

24 MR. JIM YOST: I'm Jim Yost, J-I-M Y-O-S-
25 T. Mr. Chairman and councilmembers, appreciate the

1 opportunity to come by and visit you one more time.
2 I read the plan, and I was somewhat miffed a little
3 bit when I did read that, but I decided that really
4 the plan was intended to help fish.

5 Things you want to keep in mind when
6 you're doing this is to keep in mind the
7 authorization of the dams that are out there.
8 They're not suggestions. They're real. Those
9 authorizations are real. There's flood control,
10 power generation, irrigation, and some even have
11 help for fish. But the dam operation isn't
12 controlled necessarily by the folks of the BOR or
13 the utilities. It's -- mother nature has a lot to
14 say about how we operate those dams. They're --
15 it's -- mother nature's a master of the amount of
16 water that goes into the reservoirs, whether they
17 fill or not, and also sometimes on the spill that's
18 allowed to come out of those facilities.

19 It's -- what you have to do is just do the
20 best you can with -- with what mother nature gives
21 you. Sometimes it's good, and you can do a lot.
22 Other times, it gets pretty thin. But you need to
23 balance those between the authorization and uses
24 that are there.

25 In Idaho, when the snow melts, the --

1 fills those reservoirs, sometimes it happens a
2 little later in the spring, but generally, you want
3 to send the water out of Idaho's facilities to the
4 527,000-acre feet, whatever it is now, down in the
5 spring. You send it later in summer, you have to
6 use too much water out of Dworshak to cool it down.
7 It's too warm there. And -- and it's worked well
8 for years being able to do that. Get Idaho's water
9 out and then cool it, if necessary, with Dworshak
10 releases.

11 But the water out of Idaho goes through --
12 it's owned by water uses, and they put it in a water
13 bank. BOR rents that water out of the water bank,
14 and then sends it downstream according to management
15 system that you all want, but it goes to Hells
16 Canyon, and once it hits Hells Canyon, it's passed
17 through the Hells Canyon complex. They don't store
18 it. They don't adjust it. They just send it down
19 when it arrives, and so that's -- that's how the
20 system in Idaho kind of works.

21 You know, I looked at the -- the plan has
22 basic reservoir elevations and -- and minimum
23 operating pools. It's -- it's -- we've never come
24 close to summer spill -- spill methods that you have
25 there. And power doesn't provide just electricity.

1 It provides health and -- health and economy for the
2 -- for the area, and I think that that's -- needs --
3 you just need to balance the entire authorizations
4 of the facilities and try to do the best we can with
5 what we've got. Thank you.

6 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Jim.

7 Tom Stuart, you're after Lucy. Thanks for
8 coming up, Tom.

9 MS. LUCILE KING SCOPINICH: It is indeed a
10 -- a lovely podium. I give my compliments.

11 My name is Lucile King Scopinich, L-U-C-I-
12 L-E K-I-N-G S-C-O-P-I-N-I-C-H, and I'm here to share
13 why salmon recovery and a strong fish and wildlife
14 program matter to me. I live in Boise, Idaho, and
15 I'm a ratepayer and utility customer of Idaho Power.
16 I and many other Idaho Power ratepayers and Idaho
17 taxpayers in my southwest Idaho community want our
18 Bonneville Power Administration and our utility
19 companies to prioritize fish-friendly power
20 generation and a sustainable, abundant salmon and
21 steelhead populations.

22 As a lifelong Idahoan, I've watched our
23 native fish population compromised by river water
24 impoundment and watershed degradation. Our Snake
25 River ecosystem has suffered from years of warming

1 slack water reservoirs and over appropriation of
2 water, resulting in dangerous pollution levels and
3 the upper river segments being completely deprived
4 of seasonal water flow. The abuse of the Snake
5 River for short-term profit is saddening. We can do
6 better by restoring the health of our Snake River
7 system, thus helping restore our native fisheries
8 and local economies.

9 New infrastructure in the Northwest that
10 supports a thriving economy for our farmers and
11 rural communities and restores the healthy fish
12 populations is vital. When we compromise our
13 fisheries, we compromise our regional economies.

14 Idaho Power is no longer economical and
15 clean. Millions of taxpayer dollars are
16 appropriated annually to prop up an aging reservoir
17 barging system. Taxpayer dollars support a hatchery
18 fish tracking system that fails to protect our wild
19 fish stocks. Monopoly utility companies are turning
20 to importing other fossil fuel energy alternatives
21 to power our growing region, and so our consumer
22 electricity rates continue to rise, yet we insist on
23 perpetuating a hydro power system that no longer
24 economically or ecologically serves its purpose.

25 The Northwest Power Planning Council's

1 ninth power plan will influence how the region
2 balances energy needs for fish recovery for decades
3 to come. However, it fails to include key
4 recommendations for tribal and state fishery
5 managers. Tribal and state fishery managers must be
6 a part of the long-range planning. Under the
7 Northwest Power Act, the Council is required to
8 defer to these experts.

9 MR. GOLDEN: 30 seconds.

10 MS. LUCILE KING SCOPINICH: Preserving the
11 future of our salmon, advocating for a clean,
12 reliable energy future for the Northwest is a
13 critical piece of the larger puzzle and cannot wait
14 another five years.

15 Thank you for your time and attention
16 today.

17 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you very much.

18 Tom, you're up.

19 Pat Ford, you're on deck, and Bob
20 Ferguson, you're in the on-deck circle.

21 MR. TOM STUART: Tom Stuart, T-O-M S-T-U-
22 A-R-T, of Boise.

23 Chair Milburn, Vice Chair Purce, Council
24 members, thanks for the opportunity to comment
25 today. I've been involved in Snake/Columbia salmon

1 and energy issues for decades, working alongside
2 Jeff and Ann and Jim and -- and many others over the
3 years. Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the
4 Fish and Wildlife amendments.

5 I serve on the boards of two NGOs who are
6 involved in this issue, and the Columbia Basin
7 Collaborative, all engaged fully on this issues, as
8 you're well aware. For the past 50 years, I've also
9 had a home on the Salmon River in central Idaho,
10 where wild salmon have declined from relative
11 abundance to near extinction. I'm not happy about
12 that. You know, my -- I get my power from there
13 from Bonneville, through our local co-op. I pay a
14 lot of attention to restoring salmon in the Salmon
15 River and Redfish and Redfish Lake, and only a
16 little bit to the power rates. We got the cheapest
17 power rates in the country. It's ridiculous.
18 Things are still badly out of balance.

19 Thank you for supporting the five million
20 fish recovery goal generally. I also want to
21 commend you for supporting the goals of the Columbia
22 Basin Partnership. I think that's significant. I
23 note that for wild salmon in Idaho, for southeastern
24 Washington, and northeastern Oregon, the key issue
25 is hydro ops. We have lots of habitat that's

1 underutilized, and more habitat work accomplishes
2 very little without significant hydro improvements
3 in -- in survival. Simply said, if you don't do
4 enough with hydro, the plan fails. So pay attention
5 to hydro.

6 I applaud the provision to expand and
7 stabilize spill to 125 percent TGD 24/7 throughout
8 the spring migration, but I also urge you to extend
9 that higher spill to the end of August. The
10 benefits to fishers in three states: Washington,
11 Oregon, and Idaho, are huge by expanding the
12 (indiscernible) river (indiscernible) in August.
13 Sockeye are in the river then, adults, adult
14 steelhead are coming home, fall chinook are headed
15 to the Hanford Reach and the Snake, all in August.

16 So spill in August, I think is important.
17 That's also when juvenile -- juvenile fall chinook
18 are headed out, so the health of the fishery is --
19 is -- is -- is a big deal. I'm sure Ed and -- and
20 -- and -- and Jeff know about, but fisheries in
21 Idaho have not done well the last few years. We're
22 struggling along with a remnant fishery supported
23 almost entirely by hatchery. Wild stocks are
24 declining severely, and we need August spill to
25 enhance the genetic diversity and increase the

1 number of fish.

2 Jeff and Ed, especially. Idaho political
3 policy supports an aggressive, non-breach strategy.
4 This is a chance to do that. So I think it's very
5 important that you be just as aggressive as you
6 possibly can with hydro and spill. Doing so is --
7 is very easy to defend. It's a position that
8 everybody in Idaho would agree with.

9 I'm a little frustrated, also, in closing,
10 to see Bonneville Power acting occasionally as if
11 your fish and wildlife plan is a list of suggestions
12 rather than a directive. I'd like to see tighter
13 language for accountability in that.

14 Thanks for the opportunity, and have a
15 good evening.

16 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thanks, Tom.

17 MR. TOM STUART: Thanks for coming to
18 Boise.

19 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Tom.

20 Pat, and then Mr. Ferguson. And then
21 Stephen Boorman.

22 MR. PAT FORD: I'm Pat Ford, P-A-T F-O-R-
23 D, and I reside in Boise. I'll make written
24 comments on the plan and its link to the energy
25 plan. Here, I'd like to sketch vital context for

1 the plan and for your ongoing salmon work.

2 It is the truly dire condition of Middle
3 Fork Salmon River salmon and steelhead. As I think
4 you probably know, the Middle Fork Salmon is one of
5 the premier wild rivers on Earth. Thousands come
6 from everywhere each year to boat the Middle Fork
7 and support a lot of central Idaho in so doing. The
8 Middle Fork is also by far the biggest, highest,
9 coldest, best-connected, and best-protected salmon
10 and steelhead habitat in 48 states.

11 The Middle Fork hosts nine populations of
12 chinook salmon and two of steelhead. Salmon are
13 creatures of place. The salmon in Bear Valley Creek
14 have lived in that place for the last 18,000 years
15 or so, continuously settled while continuously
16 refreshed.

17 The chart summarized results from the Nez
18 Perce tribe's extinction thresholds examination.
19 Here are some low lights. With the partial
20 exception of 2022, five of the nine chinook
21 populations in the Middle Fork are down to double
22 digits, in or soon headed to functional extinction.
23 In 2024, 867 chinook salmon returned from Middle
24 Fork. 1.2 chinook per mile of their identified
25 habitat. Steelhead, 315 returned. One steelhead

1 for every three miles of identified habitat. You
2 don't need degrees to know that those fish are in
3 deep trouble.

4 The larger populations, like Bear Valley,
5 the numbers are a bit larger, but the ratios of fish
6 to habitat are similar. I am told the 2025 return
7 was close to 2024's, and that the total number of
8 chinook redds counted last year in the upper and
9 lower middle form populations was zero. No spawning
10 salmon in the entire main span of the Middle Fork
11 and it's smaller tributaries.

12 The highest returns of the last nine years
13 were in 2022. Given hundreds of miles of high-
14 quality habitat, the numbers puny, yet that is our
15 high of the decade. Nez Perce tribe estimates
16 Middle Fork chinook populations are now declining 6
17 percent per year, and steelhead 11 percent per year.
18 Their extinction is looming. You can see it in
19 motion, and it will come on our watch. I mean
20 everyone in this room.

21 My written comments will give you a few
22 other requests. For now, just one. Please invite
23 the Nez Perce tribe scientists to update the full
24 council later this year on their extinction
25 threshold work.

1 To the fishing and conservation Idahoans
2 behind me, I ask them to marshal the facts for
3 Middle Fork salmon, tell Idahoans the story in plain
4 English, and do so loudly and relentlessly for the
5 next three years.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Tom.

8 Bob Ferguson, then Stephen Boorman, then
9 Sally.

10 MR. ROBERT FERGUSON: My name is Robert, I
11 go by Bob, Ferguson, F-E-R-G-U-S-O-N. For those of
12 you from Washington, no, I'm not the governor. I
13 got my name first, so he stole mine.

14 MR. SCHRIEVER: Bob, get a little closer
15 to the mic.

16 MR. ROBERT FERGUSON: Okay. Is this
17 better?

18 MR. SCHRIEVER: That's much better. Thank
19 you.

20 MR. ROBERT FERGUSON: Okay. My background
21 is I spend my career in the power industry working
22 with contracts. Also working with renewable
23 resources and spent a fair amount of time working in
24 coastal plants, where I dealt with fisheries there.

25 Since I've moved up here to Idaho, I have

1 made a deliberate effort to understand what's going
2 on associated with fisheries and dams here.
3 Specifically, my concern is the Snake River dam,
4 which is located in this region. I have made some
5 comments that are written down that I'm going to try
6 and read right now.

7 Reading the draft of the 2026 Program, I
8 found it provided very specific guidelines for hydro
9 operations. The language indicated maybe best
10 efforts would be used in operations compliance.
11 There is a power crisis on the horizon. What I
12 consider a perfect storm. And maybe the guidelines
13 of best efforts are not going to controlling what
14 actually happens.

15 The things that are happening now, there's
16 a lack of snow on the Snake River system right now.
17 There's over 16 million megawatt hours of solar and
18 wind curtailments in California alone, plus what is
19 happening up here with solar and wind as well. This
20 is a -- this is power being thrown away because
21 there's no place to put it. Note the contracts for
22 the developers usually require payments for that
23 power when it's curtailed. That's one other leg of
24 the crisis.

25 Another element of is right now,

1 California, despite massive amounts of batteries and
2 other things are importing 5- to 10,000 megawatts at
3 night of power from outside the state -- the state.
4 That includes the Pacific Northwest and the
5 Southwest.

6 It is likely to become a political,
7 financial, and environmental problem much greater
8 than what took place 25 years ago, primarily in
9 California. But I have seen other utilities
10 affected outside of California, and it will be a
11 West Coast phenomena. When it happens, it
12 conceivably could happen as soon as this time next
13 year.

14 MR. GOLDEN: It's about time, Bob.

15 MR. ROBERT FERGUSON: Okay. I suggest a
16 pilot program with the Lower Snake River dams to be
17 able to balance 1,000 megawatts associated with
18 solar as a pilot plan to deal with these kinds of
19 issues in the future.

20 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Bob.

21 Stephen, Sally, and then Tori O'Neal.

22 MR. STEPHEN BOORMAN: Hey. Thank you.
23 And my name's Stephen Boorman, and it's S-T-E-P-H-E-
24 N B-O-O-R-M-A-N. And I work for the City of Idaho
25 Falls, Idaho Falls Power. And we are the fifth

1 largest city in -- in the State of Idaho. We have
2 our own municipal utility, and we've been a
3 organization since 1900, so the math on our -- how
4 long we've been around is pretty easy. It's 125
5 years. And personally, I've been in public power in
6 the Northwest for 30 years now. In that time, I've
7 seen easy problems to solve, and needless to say,
8 fish and wildlife problems are not one of the easy
9 problems to solve. So a lot of respect for the
10 Council in -- in dealing with this issues, because
11 it's tough. And I don't envy you, balancing
12 environmental stewardship with economic realities
13 across the Columbia River Basin. Hydro power is
14 central to that balance.

15 Well, Idaho Falls Power generates just
16 over 33 percent of our requirements for electricity
17 and over -- over 90 percent of our power is hydro,
18 with the rest being Bonneville. Of particular
19 concern to us is any loss in generation. Idaho
20 Falls Power just built a gas peaking plant this
21 year. That plant runs when there's not enough hydro
22 in the river. So that is -- that is the
23 counterbalance to -- to reductions in the -- in the
24 system today, is -- is gas generation.

25 And I would like to share a story. Years

1 ago, I was at a rate increase hearing, and as to
2 usual, you know, there was the wailing and gnashing
3 of teeth. They couldn't afford the rates, and the
4 pitchforks, and all of that goes with any time you
5 have a rate increase hearing. And I had a
6 councilmember afterwards make a very insightful
7 statement. He said, we've got customers that can't
8 afford that rate increase hearing, and they are not
9 here tonight. And that's true here. Most of us
10 here tonight, put on a nice jacket. We can afford
11 an incremental increase in rates for fish and
12 wildlife costs, but there are probably that cannot
13 afford that.

14 A couple days later, after that hearing, a
15 guy came into City Hall to pay his bill and he's
16 kind of a broken-down, old logger, and he was,
17 like, 50 cents short on his bill, and the City clerk
18 said, sir, you know, we can catch it next month, but
19 he had to fish the money out of his pocket and pay
20 it, and -- and I'm talking to him, and I -- and he
21 lived in senior housing, and he didn't have enough
22 money in his savings account to put gas in my pickup
23 at the time, so I don't remember what the number
24 was, but wasn't very big.

25 So I guess my challenge to you guys is as

1 you look at these fish and wildlife costs, we trust
2 you to -- to vet those and make sure you can look
3 any, you know, broken-down logger in the Northwest
4 in the eye and say, we spent this money wisely. So
5 that's my challenge to you tonight. Thanks.

6 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Stephen.

7 Sally, then Jack -- Jack is on deck.

8 MS. SALLY CAVAZOS: Thank you for having
9 me. My name is Sally Binton (phonetic) Cavazos.
10 Cavazos is spelled C-A-V, as in Victor, A-Z, as in
11 zebra, O-S, as in Sam. I'm an Idaho native, fourth
12 generation. My family has lived in eastern Idaho,
13 central Idaho, and southwestern Idaho.

14 I have been a part of the central Idaho --
15 I'm going to basically talk about the Stanely area
16 -- for a decade. I am here to express how the
17 salmon have been a part of my life for decades, and
18 that I believe salmon recovery in Idaho is crucial.

19 It was 1969 when I stood on the banks of
20 the Main Salmon River near -- near Obsidian, Idaho,
21 which is between Redfish Road and Smiley Creek. I
22 was only nine years old when my parents had rented a
23 ranch aside the river for our outfitting and guiding
24 business. I stood there, mesmerized by the
25 glimmering light reflecting off clear, clean,

1 flowing waters, which were gushing over and around
2 large river rocks.

3 But then I saw a rock moving upstream.
4 How could that be? As I carefully searched the
5 river, I realized that the river was full of these
6 moving objects, but they were not rocks at all. In
7 fact, they were huge fish. As I walked across the
8 narrow bridge that crossed the river, I began to
9 notice more fish. One was turned on its side,
10 flipping its tail back and forth over the sandy
11 patches. Later, I would discover, on a ride along
12 the bank of the river, some of the fish lying dead
13 in the shallows. I didn't know then how the ocean's
14 nutrients were brought back to central Idaho's
15 ecosystem through the great fishers -- fishes'
16 sacrifices, but I could see what a unique fish this
17 was, even then, at nine years old.

18 Today, when I walk along that same river
19 in that same place in Stanley Basin, I am grateful
20 that the river runs clear and cold, but I am very
21 saddened by the utter lack of salmon in the Salmon
22 River. Now, if I want to see a salmon, I have to go
23 to the fish hatchery and see them in rectangular
24 river cages, where they will end their journey,
25 instead of along the banks of the river, giving

1 nutrients back to the Idaho ecosystem.

2 The salmon have always been a vital part
3 of central Idaho's river system, and they should
4 have a future here. The salmon and steelhead fish
5 industry bring millions of dollars to Idaho's
6 economy, whether it's through fly fisherman on the
7 clear, or a family vacationing at Redfish Lake
8 Lodge.

9 I support the removal of the Lower Snake
10 River Dam's accountability of BPA to achieve their
11 program goals and elevated levels of spill through
12 the end of August on these dams to give the fish a
13 fighting chance. Every nine-year-old kid in the
14 future deserves the chance to experience wild salmon
15 in the Salmon River, don't you think?

16 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you.

17 Tori? Then Jack, then Stephen Pfeiffer.

18 TORI O'NEAL: Good afternoon, members of
19 the Council. Hopefully, you can hear me. My name
20 is Tori O'Neal, T-O-R-I O, apostrophe, N-E-A-L. I'm
21 a fifth generation cattle rancher in Pahsimeroi
22 Valley in the Upper Salmon River Basin. I also run
23 cattle in an allotment that includes Morgan Creek
24 and Panther Creek, and I serve as an elected
25 supervisor with the Custer Soil and Water

1 Conservation District.

2 Today, I want to speak to you about what
3 I've seen firsthand. That locally led conversation
4 through soil and water districts is producing real
5 results in Idaho's headwaters. Those results are
6 possible because of the framework this Council has
7 established in the Fish and Wildlife Program, which
8 support habit (sic) restoration and mitigation in
9 partnership with local communities.

10 In our watershed, conservation happens
11 because of relationships. Our conservation district
12 works directly with producers and land owners who --
13 whose operations depend on these landscapes,
14 allowing voluntary projects to move forward,
15 particularly on private working lands, where much of
16 this habitat exists.

17 In the Pahsimeroi and Upper Salmon
18 corridors, I've watched riparian restoration,
19 barrier removal, irrigation efficiency work, and
20 infrastructure replacements improve stream function
21 and reconnect habitat. We are seeing more fish
22 using restored areas along with improved water
23 quality and more resilient working landscapes.

24 We are also seeing a cultural shift. The
25 distrust that once accompanied conservation efforts

1 has diminished. The producers of especially my
2 generation increasingly see ourselves as part of the
3 solution and take pride in participating without
4 fearing that our livelihoods are being jeopardized
5 or minimized. That trust exists because soil
6 conservation districts are locally elected and
7 accountable entities that balance habitat
8 restoration with ranch viability and understanding
9 working lands.

10 In Upper Basin communities like ours, we
11 have little control over ocean survival or
12 mainstream passage, but under -- under the
13 mitigation framework established through this
14 Council's program, we can improve habitat and water
15 conditions locally, and that work is happening. We
16 strongly support maintaining locally led, ESA-
17 focused mitigation frameworks. Expanding program
18 dollars beyond core ESA fish mitigation does risk
19 diluting resources that are already working
20 effectively in headwater habitat restoration.
21 Research and monitoring are important, but we
22 encourage you to also balance that because it's
23 essential that implementation and long-term
24 maintenance remain well-funded.

25 From where I sit, as a rancher and a

1 conservation district supervisor, the locally led
2 model is working. We encourage the Council to
3 continue strengthening that approach.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Tori.

6 Jack, Stephen, and then Kelly Richmond.

7 MR. JACK HURTY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
8 members of the Council. My name is Jack Hurty, J-A-
9 C-K H-U-R-T-Y. I'm here as the policy director for
10 the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association, and I
11 appreciate this opportunity to -- to give some
12 comment.

13 Our members operate across Idaho's public
14 lands and waters and depend directly on healthy,
15 harvestable, and resilient salmon and steelhead
16 populations. Many, if not, most of them, are BPA
17 ratepayers living and working in the watersheds that
18 the Council is charged with conserving. These
19 fisheries are not abstract policy goals to them.
20 They are the biological and economic foundation of a
21 significant portion of Idaho's four-billion-dollar
22 outdoor recreation economy and the rural livelihoods
23 that go along with it.

24 Outfitters and guides rely on predictable
25 access, sustainable fish populations, and long-term

1 management certainty. When runs decline, the
2 impacts are felt immediately in lost trips, reduced
3 employment, and diminished opportunities for Idaho
4 residents and visitors alike. IOGA supports a Fish
5 and Wildlife Program that is robust, science based,
6 and accountable, and that meets the Council's legal
7 obligations of the Northwest Power Act.

8 I want to thank you all for the work that
9 you've done so far in putting together a Fish and
10 Wildlife plan and fulfilling your mandate towards
11 salmon and steelhead. In particular, the five
12 million fish goal is commendable and we would like
13 to support that.

14 However, there are some things that I'd
15 urge the Council to add. In particular, we'd ask
16 the Council to adopt spill operations through August
17 31st as a core program measure. Data has shown
18 improving travel times for juvenile salmon and
19 steelhead during late summer migration is essential
20 to rebuilding these wild stocks that sustain Idaho's
21 fisheries.

22 We'd ask that the Bonneville Power
23 Administration be held accountable to the Fish and
24 Wildlife Program goals. It must fully implement
25 required measures and be held responsible for

1 outcomes, not just process.

2 Finally, we'd ask that you acknowledge the
3 role of the Lower Snake dam removal and replacement
4 as a centerpiece action among a suite of recovery
5 measures in the program framework. Since 1999, IOGA
6 membership has affirmed that removal of the Lower
7 Snake River dams and replacement of their services
8 is the long-term solution for the basin, and that
9 position is backed up by decades of peer-reviewed
10 science and longitudinal data. I think reasonable
11 -- reasonable people can disagree on the timeline
12 for that or how to best balance different needs of
13 the basin, but we cannot talk about recovering these
14 fish or meeting the five million fish goal without
15 that.

16 IOGA believes that Idaho can have both a
17 reliable energy system and abundant, fishable salmon
18 and steelhead populations. This 2026 Fish and
19 Wildlife Program is a critical opportunity to move
20 decisively towards that outcome. We respectfully
21 request that the Council incorporate the full suite
22 of recommendations from state and tribal fishery
23 managers and adopt a final program that delivers
24 measurable recovery, economic stability for river-
25 dependent communities, and long-term certainty for

1 the region.

2 Thank you for considering these comments.

3 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Jack.

4 Stephen? And then Kelly and then Edwina
5 Allen.

6 MR. STEPHEN PFEIFFER: I'm Stephen
7 Pfeiffer, S-T-E-P-H-E-N P-F-E-I-F-F-E-R. I'm a born
8 and raised Idahoan and I work for Idaho Rivers
9 United. I'd like to thank the Council for the work
10 on the draft program thus far and for the
11 opportunity to speak this afternoon.

12 In crafting this next iteration of the
13 program, the Council must acknowledge the reality
14 surrounding our salmon and steelhead runs,
15 particularly that of the Snake River stocks
16 returning to Idaho. The historic and ongoing
17 detrimental effects of the hydro system are laid
18 bare when considering Idaho salmon. An intact,
19 pristine network of thousands of miles of spawning
20 and rearing streams for salmon exists in central
21 Idaho. This (indiscernible) of habitat truly should
22 be a Bristol Bay of the Lower 48. An economic
23 engine for rural Idaho communities in the service of
24 self-sustaining abundance for the wider region.

25 The cumulative experience of juvenile

1 migration through the eight-dam hydro system from
2 Idaho to the sea continues to be the largest
3 survival bottleneck in meaningfully recovering
4 populations of Snake River fish. Despite access to
5 this incredible habitat, Snake River salmon and
6 steelhead populations are trending towards
7 extinction, with many having crossed the quasi-
8 extinction threshold.

9 Change is clearly needed to recover Idaho
10 salmon and to realize the Council's Northwest Power
11 Act's duty to craft a program that protects,
12 mitigates, and enhances salmon populations. The
13 Council must recognize the necessity of long-term
14 changes to the federal hydro system and begin to
15 actively plan for the breaching of the four Lower
16 Snake River dams and energy replacement during
17 planning associated with the ninth power plan.

18 In the near term, it is critical that the
19 Council fully incorporate the recommendations of
20 fisheries managers into the Fish and Wildlife
21 Program, which call for optimized fish passage and
22 survival through the hydro system. There is an also
23 an obligation to do so under the Northwest Power Act
24 4(h)(6)(E)(ii).

25 With smart planning by the Council, these

1 recommendations can also be fully compatible with
2 the Act's mandate to provide adequate, efficient,
3 economical, and reliable power supplies for the
4 region. Examples of this include the Council needs
5 to incorporate recommendations to achieve the
6 outlined faster water transit times, which are
7 critical to meet the regional -- regional objective
8 of smolt to adult return rates in the two to six
9 percent range.

10 Additionally, outlining elevated summer
11 spill at the Lower Snake River dams through August
12 31st to achieve the greatest biological benefits.
13 The current strategy, which calls for adaptive
14 management with an August 1st end date, ignores the
15 expertise of fishery managers and repeats the same
16 wider pattern of diminishing these important
17 recommendations to contour to a hydro system
18 management scheme that is failing the fish.

19 I'm confident the Council has the ability
20 to fully incorporate fisheries managers'
21 recommendations in the new plan in order to truly
22 give co-equal footing to meaningful salmon recovery
23 alongside power generation. Idahoans deserve a
24 future with abundant salmon runs flooding our rivers
25 once again. Please exercise your important role in

1 building tangible progress towards this vision.

2 Thanks for your time.

3 MR. SCHRIEVER: Kelly Richmond, Edwina
4 Allen, and then Corinne Haley.

5 MS. KELLY RICHMOND: Hi. I'm Kelly
6 Richmond, K-E-L-L-Y R-I-C-H-M-O-N-D, and I live in
7 Boise, Idaho. I am a paying customer of Idaho Power
8 and I volunteer with the Idaho Sierra Club.

9 Members of the Northwest Power and
10 Conservation Council, thank you for the chance to
11 speak today, and thank you for your work on the 2026
12 Fish and Wildlife Program. I urge you to adopt all
13 necessary measures to recover endangered salmon and
14 steelhead in the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

15 Thank you for keeping the recovery goal of
16 five million returning salmon each year. That goal
17 matters. Salmon are essential to the region's
18 culture, economy, and ecosystems. For tribal
19 nations, salmon have sustained communities for
20 thousands of years, and yet, these populations
21 remain at crisis levels.

22 New data from the 2025 Hot Water Report
23 show how acute this crisis has become. Many
24 reservoirs behind the Lower Snake River and Columbia
25 dams experience more than 80 days of water above the

1 68-degree threshold considered harmful for migrating
2 salmon and steelhead this year, with temperatures
3 nearing 73 to 74 degrees Fahrenheit, above -- well
4 above the safe levels. These hot, stagnant waters
5 also continue to fuel toxic algal blooms that
6 further stress already endangered fish.

7 With the termination of the Comprehensive
8 Recovery Agreement in June of 2025, this program now
9 carries even greater responsibility to act. You
10 have an opportunity, in fact, an obligation, to move
11 essential recovery action forward.

12 First, the plan must include elevated
13 spillover -- elevated spillover dams through August
14 31st, as many have already stated. Elevated spill
15 remains the safest and most effective way for
16 juvenile salmon and steelhead to pass dams on their
17 long journey to the ocean.

18 Second, the plan must incorporate all
19 recommendations from tribal and state fish managers.
20 These experts understand what's needed and the law
21 requires deference to their expertise. Thank you
22 for honoring their obligation.

23 Third, adopt a 2035 timeframe to reach the
24 five million fish goal, and hold Bonneville Power
25 Administration accountable for protecting the

1 fisheries and honoring treaty responsibilities.

2 I also want to be clear that I understand
3 that the Council does not have the authority to
4 authorize breaching the Lower Snake River dams.
5 This is -- this is precisely why it's essential to
6 fully analyze dam breaching in the ninth power plan
7 along other hydro power options. No single action
8 would do more to reduce lethal -- lethal water
9 temperatures and restore salmon abundance.

10 Finally, we need declared performance
11 standards, strong monitoring --

12 MR. GOLDEN: That's about time. And
13 that's about time.

14 MS. KELLY RICHMOND: Okay. So thank you
15 for your time and your commitment to both a salmon
16 recovery and reliable energy future.

17 MR. GOLDEN: Thank you.

18 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you.

19 Edwina Allen, Corinne Haley, and Luke
20 Schaefer, I believe.

21 MS. EDWINA ALLEN: Members of the Council,
22 my name is Edwina Allen, E-D-W-I-N-A A-L-L-E-N. I
23 live in Boise.

24 Checking my files, I find that since 1991,
25 I have been submitting comments advocating for

1 action to save Northwest salmon, comments to the
2 many federal agency meetings. This -- the issue was
3 and remains the disastrous effect on salmon survival
4 caused by four Lower Snake River dams. It is tragic
5 that all Idaho is hundreds of miles of pristine
6 spawning habitat for salmon and steelhead. These
7 fish face extinction because dams are lethal to both
8 smolts migrating to the ocean and for adults
9 returning to spawn.

10 Economic studies show we are spending more
11 money to kill a fish than it'd take to save it. I
12 am an Idaho Power ratepayer. As a ratepayer, I care
13 about having an affordable and reliable clean energy
14 system that also supports strong, sustainable, and
15 abundant salmon populations.

16 I'd urge you to adopt the final 2026 Fish
17 and Wildlife Program that includes the full range of
18 robust, accountable, and actionable matters
19 necessary to achieve the Council's legal obligations
20 for the next 5 to 10 years, and make actionable
21 progress for salmon and steelhead recovery.

22 To achieve the Council's five million fish
23 goal, I urge you to adopt all the recommendations by
24 state and tribal fish managers throughout the region
25 so the Council will pay deference as required by the

1 Northwest Power Act, including the following three
2 priorities: elevated levels of spill through August
3 31st as a priority hydro power operations measure;
4 detailed and explicit accountability measures,
5 especially related to Bonneville Power
6 Administration's responsibility to achieve program
7 goals with a whole of government approach and to
8 address all necessary hydro power matters in the
9 north -- ninth power plan; acknowledgment of Lower
10 Snake River dam removal as necessary measure in the
11 final 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program and include an
12 analysis of dam breach scenario in the ninth power
13 plan.

14 Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

15 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you.

16 Corinne, Luke, and then Asa Polton (sic).

17 MS. CORINNE HALEY: Hi. I'm Corinne
18 Haley, C-O-R-I-N-N-E H-A-L-E-Y. I'm a resident of
19 Boise, born in the Northwest, lived in Idaho since
20 1959. And certainly, this seems -- this issue
21 talked about and talked about for decades now, and
22 here we are with our salmon in even worse condition
23 than they've ever been in. And I would just like to
24 urge you to accept the tribal and state managers
25 recommendations, as you're legally bound to, of

1 course, consider. But to make it a very urgent
2 matter to breach the dams at some point soon and to
3 put -- put our fish and wildlife and the condition
4 of our streams at the forefront of all of this so
5 that my grandchildren and my great grandchildren
6 will be able to enjoy those -- the beauty of Idaho,
7 as we have been able to.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you very much.

10 Luke, Asa, and then Paul Arrington.

11 MR. LUKE SCHAEFER: All right. Good
12 evening, everyone. My name is Luke Schaefer, L-U-K-
13 E S-C-H-A-E-F-E-R, and I live right here in Boise,
14 about, like, two blocks from here. So I would like
15 to thank you guys for coming to me so I don't have
16 to come to you. So thank you for the opportunity to
17 comment here.

18 Before I get more into it, I'm going to
19 clarify that I see the measures that I'm about to
20 talk about should be seen as short-term mitigation
21 to avoid extinction and the long-term solutions are
22 going to involve a dam breach on the Lower four
23 Snake River dams, and an analysis of which should be
24 included in the ninth power plan. And if you don't
25 agree with that, that is all right. You will agree

1 with my statement that the strongest possible
2 measures should be taken, because that will prove
3 that maybe salmon and dams can coexist in this
4 system, and I sure hope they can.

5 So the first note here is I encourage the
6 Council to adopt the expanded spill operations
7 through August 31st to fully coincide with the more
8 complete assemblage of the out-migrating smolts and
9 the up-migrating adults.

10 And I also urge an implementation of hard
11 limits on the pool elevations near minimum operating
12 pool for the Lower Columbia River dams, as was
13 proposed for the Lower Snake dams. The reservoirs
14 behind the McNary and John Day Dams are especially
15 lethal for migrating salmon and have extensive
16 shallows, and any reduction in pool elevation can
17 have significant benefits in reduced solar loading,
18 thus keeping temperatures a bit lower.

19 I also support the Upper Snake River
20 tribe's request for investigations into the
21 reintroduction of anadromous fish above the Hells
22 Canyon complex. And I was a bit disappointed to see
23 the draft program defer action on this matter.
24 Currently, Idaho Power is using a 25-year-old
25 feasibility study to defend inaction on this issue

1 within their FERC relicensing process, and as we can
2 see in the Boise River, just a stone's throw away
3 from here, a lot can change in a river in 25 years,
4 and a lot of good work has been done. We -- we just
5 need more data.

6 And I'll wrap up by saying as an Idahoan
7 living paycheck to paycheck, I reject the idea that
8 we can't afford to save salmon, and on the other
9 hand, we can't afford to save these salmon and
10 steelhead and all of the other listed species.
11 Extinction of culturally significant species and the
12 resultant erosion of sense of place is a lesson
13 we've learned too many times. Let's not have to
14 learn that again. Our salmon and steelhead are our
15 past. Let's make sure they're our future.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

17 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Luke.

18 Asa, Paul Arrington, and Jessica Matlock.

19 Young man, congratulations.

20 MR. ASA PARTIN: Thank you. Hi. I'm Asa
21 Partin, A-S-A P-A-R-T-I-N, and I will be a ratepayer
22 before this program has completed its five-year
23 term. I hunt and fish and have been taught that
24 stewardship of our resources is vital.

25 I was 13 before I saw my first salmon with

1 my mom on the Salmon River. Just over a century
2 ago, I would have seen thousands of salmon at a time
3 during their runs. As the legend goes, you used to
4 be able to cross the Columbia River standing only on
5 the backs of salmon. Meriwether Lewis said the
6 multitude of fish was almost inconceivable. Now,
7 it's hard to conceive of them here at all. 16
8 million wild salmon were believed to run the
9 Columbia Basin in one year compared to less than 2
10 million today, very few of which are wild.

11 I believe that more things must be added
12 to the final Fish and Wildlife Program to support
13 salmon recovery. Under the scientific foundations
14 and principles section, the draft says that the
15 Council is directed by Congress through the NPA to
16 use the best available scientific information in its
17 decisions. And the best data we have says that
18 increasing the spill through August 31st would
19 greatly increase the survival rates of wild juvenile
20 salmon, and is the recommendation from state and
21 tribal agencies to whom you pay deference.

22 We implore you to include strong,
23 enforceable measures that BPA must achieve
24 sufficient to meet the Council's legal obligations
25 and actually achieve the goal of five million adult

1 salmon and steelhead returning annually. Tribal
2 treaties made in the 1800s are still the law, even
3 though we have tended to try to bypass them. Please
4 hold BPA accountable for the actions they have
5 taken, which directly violate the treaties.

6 In H 7 of your draft, it states that the
7 Council assumes that in the near term, the breaching
8 of the mainstream Columbia and Snake River dams will
9 not occur. But this -- but overwhelming evidence
10 shows that removing the four Lower Snake River dams
11 is the best way to recover fish populations.

12 And Council, I don't think I'm overstating
13 to say that we that we Idahoans really want their
14 salmon back. If we keep going the way we are, I'm
15 going to end up telling my children about the good
16 times long ago, when we used to have a few salmon
17 left. We have a chance to act now. If the salmon,
18 a keystone species, go extinct, and they are well on
19 the road to extinction, everyone suffers.

20 I end with imploring you to defer to the
21 scientists and tribes to complete your program.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Asa.

24 Paul Arrington, Jessica Matlock, Todd
25 Ungerecht.

1 MR. PAUL ARRINGTON: Thank you. I think
2 all of us want an Asa in our camp. I love to have,
3 just the youth come in talking about these issues.
4 It's great.

5 Paul Arrington, P-A-U-L A-R-R-I-N-G-T-O-N.
6 I represent the Idaho Water Users Association. I
7 really appreciate the opportunity to come here today
8 and to hear this testimony. I enjoy hearing the
9 broad scope of perspectives about a fish plan that
10 you've been instructed by law to put together. It's
11 interesting to me that if you made me king for a
12 day, I'm sure this plan would look very different,
13 tailored to the specific interests of our specific
14 representatives. And I -- if you were to ask
15 anybody else in this room, they'd probably would do
16 the same thing. It -- there'd be a lot of
17 similarities, but some very different things.
18 Unfortunately, I'm not king for a day, and so it's
19 upon you to develop a plan that balances the
20 interests, the impacts, and the needs in the region.
21 I found this interesting, your little
22 handout today, where the summary of what the power
23 plan directs you to do. To develop with broad
24 public participation a program to protect, mitigate,
25 and enhance fish and wildlife affected by the

1 development and operation of the hydro power systems
2 in the Columbia River Basin while also assuring the
3 Pacific Northwest an adequate, efficient,
4 economical, and reliable power supply.

5 Developing a plan that checks those boxes
6 necessarily requires some give and take. It's not
7 going to have everything I want. It's not going to
8 have everything you may want. And we believe that
9 the Council has done an admirable job in this
10 effort.

11 We've heard a lot today of comments about
12 fisheries and needs for balancing fisheries. We
13 cannot lose sight of the energy side of this as
14 well. There's a lot of challenges we face here in
15 the Northwest. Further -- further energy demands
16 with growth of communities and industries and the
17 conversion of everything we have to electricity will
18 only intensify the challenges we are facing.

19 So thank you very much for your
20 consideration of this plan. We appreciate the
21 balance that you are -- are working on, and that is
22 all. Thank you.

23 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Paul.

24 Jessica, Todd, and then Candice Partin.

25 MS. JESSICA MATLOCK: Good afternoon,

1 Chair, and Councilmembers. My name's Jessica
2 Matlock, J-E-S-S-I-C-A M-A-T-L-O-C-K, and I live
3 here in Boise, Idaho.

4 I am the president and CEO of Pacific
5 Northwest Generating Cooperative, or PNGC, Power.
6 PNGC Power is uniquely situated as the Pacific
7 Northwest's only operating generative -- generating
8 and transmission cooperative and joint operating
9 entity under federal law. Our member span seven
10 states and operate across eight balancing authority
11 areas. And we serve over a million people,
12 primarily in rural communities that investor-owned
13 utilities will not serve.

14 We are also Bonneville Power's largest
15 customer. As a result, our members pay a
16 substantial share of BPA's costs. Our members are
17 located throughout the rural stretches of BPA's
18 service territory, and include critical agricultural
19 and farming communities that support the Northwest
20 economy, and they are heavily impacted by BPA policy
21 and cost decisions.

22 I have spent my career working at the
23 intersection of environmental protection and public
24 service. I served in the U.S. Coast Guard,
25 including fishery enforcement. I later worked as an

1 environmental planner for the City of Portland. I
2 also served as a Fish & Wildlife manager at the
3 Bonneville Power Administration. And I served as a
4 board member of the Washington Conservation Voters.
5 I ran a rural electric co-op in southwest Colorado,
6 and I today, I help build and secure power supply
7 for 25 electric utilities.

8 I understand deeply the importance of
9 protecting fish and our river systems, and I have
10 actually dedicated years of my professional life to
11 that work. But I also understand the responsibility
12 to protect people, and in my opinion, at this time
13 in the Northwest, increased spill at Columbia River
14 Basin system dams will endanger lives and financial
15 well-being of the people in the Northwest.

16 EPA's latest report shows the region
17 facing emerging winter energy and capacity deficits.
18 And NERC's 2026 assessment warns the western grid
19 has elevated reliability risk during extreme winter
20 and summer events. In the Northwest, that risk is
21 most acute during multiday winter cold snaps, often
22 in low water years, and in the summer. The January
23 2024 cold snap made it real. Demand surged for
24 days, wind output fell to zero, thermal units were
25 maxed out, and it was hydro backed by imports that

1 provided the flexibility. Increasing spill, thereby
2 reducing firm hydro generation, increases blackout
3 risk and price volatility.

4 At the same time, affordability is also
5 serious. Nationally, average monthly residential
6 rates went up 30 percent since 2021.

7 And I'll go fast.

8 MR. GOLDEN: That's time.

9 MS. JESSICA MATLOCK: Few families have
10 the financial flexibility to continue to absorb that
11 type of increase. We are seeing more
12 disconnections, people that can't pay for food or
13 medical care. When we talk about spill, that
14 reduces hydro power, we must recognize that hydro
15 power's not just a clean resource, it's the
16 backbone.

17 My last comment.

18 Congress directed the region to protect
19 and enhance fish and wildlife, but that directive is
20 paired with an assurance of adequate, efficient,
21 economical, and reliable power source to the region.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Jessica.

24 Todd, Candice, and then Ella.

25 MR. TODD UNGERECHT: My name Todd

1 Ungerecht, T-O-D-D- U-N-G-E-R-E-C-H-T. Thank you,
2 Councilmembers, for the opportunity to comment on
3 the draft 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program.

4 As a lifelong Columbia Basin resident, as
5 a former staffer for multiple Northwest members of
6 Congress, senior advisor for NOAA, and former staff
7 to the Council, I have been a part of and witnessed
8 the debate on balancing the needs of region's energy
9 supply and salmon for decades. In my review, the
10 2026 draft plan includes several positives and a few
11 that raise my eyebrows that I believe should be
12 adjusted.

13 First, the positives. The plan includes
14 expanded efforts to control salmon-eating predators:
15 sea lions, northern pike, cormorants, and other
16 birds that are a growing problem to salmon in the
17 Northwest.

18 The plan wisely promotes the region's
19 critical hatcheries and fish passage structures and
20 artificial propagation programs to boost while
21 protecting naturally spawning populations. The plan
22 continues the many successful habitat restoration
23 projects in the basin.

24 Now, the not so positives. Mandating
25 aspirational recovery goals of five million adult

1 fish is discouraging to the steady, measurable
2 progress that has been made over the past three
3 decades, from the lows of 1 million fish in the
4 1990s to rough 2.4 million rolling 10-year average
5 that is happening right now due to the good work of
6 many, including this Council.

7 According to the 2025 E3 study, the
8 Northwest faces a 1,300 megawatt electricity
9 resource gap this year, and up to 8,600 megawatts by
10 2030, with a potential 26 percent loss of low
11 probability. 24-hour spills above gas caps through
12 dams, restricting dams' ability to balance
13 intermittent wind and solar, and extreme agendas by
14 certain groups to tear out the Snake dams will only
15 make the situation worse, making it harder to
16 deliver electricity to places like Seattle and
17 Olympia, all for questionable effects to salmon.

18 In closing, I applaud the Council's focus
19 on realistic solutions to balance salmon's needs
20 while also recognizing the importance of maintaining
21 dam operations. Salmon will continue benefiting
22 from predation control, ensuring well-run
23 hatcheries, and improving habitat.

24 But the region can't afford rolling
25 blackouts or eliminating barge transportation. We

1 need clean, renewable, and reliable hydro power as
2 well as support for agriculture and ports' ability
3 to utilize the critical navigation link from
4 Lewiston to the ocean. Scarce dollars must not be
5 used to fund actions that restrict flexibility and
6 reliability of dam operations and which undermine
7 the Bonneville Power Administration's financial
8 stability.

9 Thank you.

10 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Todd.

11 Candice, Ella, and then Lilly Wilson.

12 MS. CANDICE PARTIN: Good evening,
13 Council. Candice Partin, C-A-N-D-I-C-E P-A-R-T-I-N.

14 Roosevelt said that wildlife and its
15 habitat cannot speak, so we must and we will. That
16 is why I am here today. We the people own the
17 wildlife and the salmon, and they are held in public
18 trust. I actually learned that in hunters' ed in
19 this building. We depend on the government agencies
20 to manage them properly.

21 I'm a home-schooling mom here in Idaho,
22 and I thought about talking about how much time we
23 spend on the Salmon River and how much the salmon
24 mean to us, but it feels a little tone deaf because
25 we know who's suffered the most is the tribes. The

1 tribes who depend on salmon as their food source.

2 I was told by a friend that if the dams
3 were breached, it would make our energy bill go up
4 by three times, but to my surprise, this number is
5 nowhere to be found in any cost analysis from
6 Washington and BPA and the Save Our Salmon. Those
7 are the ones that I could find, and that number
8 isn't anywhere to be found. The dams were always a
9 myopic endeavor, sending out ripple effects
10 throughout our entire ecosystem, but we have the
11 option to replace the energy with both cleaner forms
12 of energy and gas and still come out with some of
13 the cheapest energy in the country while protecting
14 our salmon. Yet, the misinformation remains in
15 circulation, which brings me to the draft, Council.

16 In H 7, it is missing an analysis on
17 replacing the energy from the LSR dams. The public
18 deserves to know what we as ratepayers would pay if
19 the dams were breached. What if it is a price that
20 we are willing to pay for a restored river ecosystem
21 and an abundant, healthy fish population?

22 For thousands of years, the ecosystem here
23 was built on the backs on salmon, where they came to
24 spawn and die. Millions of pounds of natural
25 fertilizer, all but vanished. What if it is a price

1 we are willing to pay to uphold the U.S. part of the
2 treaty rights with our regional tribes? What if it
3 is a price we are willing to pay for a free-flowing
4 river and the autonomy that it brings?

5 The region's citizens deserve to know what
6 they are exchanging for a 10 percent energy cut.
7 \$30 a month. We can do this for our salmon. An
8 analysis should be added to the plan and public
9 input is needed to see if maybe it is a price we are
10 willing to pay.

11 As for spill, in the draft, you say you
12 give weight to recommendations made by federal and
13 state fish and wildlife agencies and tribes. We
14 have to run our waterways as close to a natural
15 river as possible. I ask for you to defer to the
16 tribes and the state agencies on this matter.

17 MR. GOLDEN: That's about time.

18 MS. CANDICE PARTIN: Last, I will end, my
19 kids and I would love to continue to benefit from
20 the salmon and returning to the Salmon River. Thank
21 you, Council, for helping keep the five million fish
22 goal and thank you for continuing your work in
23 holding entities accountable.

24 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Candice.

25 Ella, Lilly, and then Rachel Brinkley.

1 MS. ELLA JENVEJA: Good afternoon. My
2 name is Ella Jenveja, E-L-L-A J-E-N-V-E-J-A, and I
3 am a senior at Riverstone International School in
4 Boise.

5 I grew up in Idaho spending my summers
6 exploring our rivers and our public lands. Salmon
7 and steelhead are essential to our state's history
8 and culture, and I hope we can all work together to
9 ensure there are viable populations for generations
10 to come.

11 Although I'm still a student, I believe I
12 must advocate for affordable, reliable, and clean
13 energy systems, while -- while protecting healthy
14 salmon populations. Right now, salmon and steelhead
15 across the Columbia Basin are struggling to return
16 to their home waters. To reach the Council's goal
17 of five million returning adult salmon each year,
18 the program should reflect the recommendations of
19 state and tribal fisheries managers.

20 First, it should prioritize increased
21 spill through August 31st. Wild juvenile salmon and
22 steelheads that return later in the summer make up a
23 significant portion of fish headed back to Idaho.
24 Increased spill through August is one of the most
25 effective tools available to improve survival and it

1 has been recommended by state and tribal fishery
2 managers.

3 Second, the program should acknowledge
4 Lower Snake River dam removal as a -- as a recovery
5 option necessary to meet long-term goals. Research
6 shows that breaching the four Lower Snake River dams
7 would provide major benefits to Snake River salmon
8 and steelhead populations. Including this program
9 keeps all viable options on the table as the region
10 works towards recovery.

11 As a young Idahoan, I want -- I want a
12 future with both reliable, clean energy and healthy
13 salmon runs. That means adopting, rather than
14 delaying, the hydro power measures recommended by
15 state and tribal fishery managers and integrating
16 that into regional power planning. The decision
17 made in this program will affect communities,
18 ecosystems, and generations across the Northwest for
19 decades. I encourage the Council to adopt a Fish
20 and Wildlife Program that gives salmon and steelhead
21 a meaningful chance to recover.

22 Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

23 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you very much.

24 Lilly Wilson, Rachel, and then Jennifer
25 James.

1 MS. LILLY WILSON: Hello. My name is
2 Lilly Wilson. That is spelled L-I-L-L-Y W-I-L-S-O-
3 N. I am a college student at Boise State
4 University. I have lived in Idaho my whole entire
5 life, and I am here representing the Youth Salmon
6 Protectors.

7 Youth Salmon Protectors is a coalition of
8 young people from across the Pacific Northwest who
9 are fighting for healthy rivers, abundant salmon,
10 and a just and sustainable energy future. Our
11 network includes more than 2,000 advocates and over
12 20 chapters at high schools and universities, and we
13 believe that our generation deserves to inherit
14 rivers with wild salmon and steelhead still in them.

15 I also speak today as someone who has
16 lived and recreated in Idaho my entire life. Salmon
17 are a part of Idaho's identity. We grow up hearing
18 about them and being told that they define our
19 rivers, but it wasn't until just two years ago, in
20 Stanley, Idaho, that I saw my very first salmon.
21 For my generation, salmon are becoming a story about
22 what we've lost. Salmon and steelhead across the
23 Columbia Basin are in crisis, and younger
24 generations will live with the consequences of the
25 decisions made in the Fish and Wildlife Program.

1 That is why the Council's 2026 Fish and
2 Wildlife Program must include strong, enforceable
3 actions to recover and restore salmon and steelhead
4 while ensuring affordable, reliable energy. First,
5 I ask that you required spill through August 31st to
6 protect the later-migrating juvenile fish. This is
7 a science-based measure recommended by state and
8 tribal fishery managers. Second, do hold BPA
9 accountable with clear, measurable fish recovery
10 goals, and to uphold tribal treaty rights. Goals
11 without accountability will not recover salmon.

12 Finally, I just want to acknowledge that
13 Lower Snake dam removal is a necessary recovery
14 measure. Science shows that breaching these dams
15 would provide the single greatest benefit to Idaho
16 salmon. If the Council is serious about the goal of
17 five million returning fish, this option cannot be
18 ignored.

19 As one Idahoan representing thousands of
20 youth advocates, I want a future with abundant
21 salmon on our rivers, not just stories about what
22 used to be here.

23 Thank you very much.

24 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you.

25 Rachel, Jennifer, and Will Hart. Will is

1 the last one signed up to testify. If anyone has
2 changed their mind, you better get to Patty in the
3 back of the room or we're going to wrap it up after
4 Will.

5 MS. RACHEL BRINKLEY: All right. Thank
6 you, all. Good afternoon. My name is Rachel
7 Brinkley, R-A-C-H-E-L B-R-I-N-K-L-E-Y, and I am here
8 today from the Idaho Conservation League to comment
9 on the Council's draft 2026 Fish and Wildlife
10 Program.

11 I also grew up in Idaho, and like many
12 people here, I was raised with a deep connection to
13 our rivers, public lands, and the salmon and
14 steelhead that are a part of Idaho's identity and
15 history. I also care deeply about having an
16 affordable, reliable, clean energy system that
17 supports rather than undermines healthy and abundant
18 salmon populations.

19 Right now, salmon and steelhead across the
20 Columbia Basin are in crisis, and I urge the Council
21 to adopt a final Fish and Wildlife Program that
22 includes robust, actionable measures needed to make
23 real progress towards recovering salmon. To achieve
24 the Council's goal of five million returning adult
25 salmon each year, the program must reflect the

1 recommendations of state and tribal fisheries
2 managers.

3 First, the program must prioritize
4 increased spill through August 31st. Wild juvenile
5 salmon and steelhead that migrate later in the
6 summer make up a large share of the adults that
7 return, including fish bound for Idaho's rivers.
8 Second, the program must acknowledge Lower Snake
9 River dam removal as a necessary recovery measure to
10 meet their recovery goals. Decades of peer-reviewed
11 science shows that breaching the four Lower Snake
12 River dams would deliver the single greatest benefit
13 to Snake River salmon and steelhead.

14 These fish are tied to the rivers I grew
15 up in and around. They are crucial to the tribal
16 nations who have depended on them since time
17 immemorial, and they define the future that I want
18 for Idaho's landscapes and communities. Failing to
19 acknowledge dam removal in the Fish and Wildlife
20 Program unnecessarily limits the region's options
21 and limits our ability to recover salmon.

22 As an Idahoan, I want a future of
23 affordable, reliable, clean energy and a abundant
24 wild salmon in our rivers. That means adopting, not
25 deferring, the hydro power operations measures

1 recommended by state and tribal fisheries managers
2 and fully integrating them into regional power
3 planning as required by law.

4 If we're going to rise to the challenge of
5 increasing energy needs, we could also create a plan
6 that helps restore abundant salmon back to Idaho.

7 The choices made in this program will shape the
8 future of salmon and river communities across the
9 Northwest. I urge the Council to adopt a Fish and
10 Wildlife Program that is science based, accountable,
11 and truly capable of recovering salmon and steelhead
12 in the Columbia and Snake River Basin.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to comment
14 today, and the Idaho Conservation League will be
15 submitting written comments to follow. Thanks.

16 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you.

17 Jennifer and then Will.

18 MS. JENNIFER JAMES: Hello. My name is
19 Jennifer James. That's J-E-N-N-I-F-E-R J-A-M-E-S.
20 I'm a current resident of Boise, Idaho, and a
21 utility consumer of Idaho Power.

22 I spent most of my childhood growing up in
23 a suburban city outside of Seattle, Washington.
24 Ever summer as a kid, I'd go to this creek near
25 where my dad worked and see salmon on their yearly

1 spawning run. I'd see dozens, if not hundreds of
2 them in a small tributary creek that most people
3 wouldn't even know the name of unless you lived
4 nearby, but they would pack the waters. You'd see,
5 at the end of summer, their bodies after spawning
6 lining the banks of that creek, and you'd see eagles
7 and otters and other animals that fed on the
8 carcasses. Now, if you go back to that creek in the
9 summer, you'd be lucky to see one or two fish.

10 Urban development has led to toxic runoff
11 and high water temperatures, and killed most of the
12 salmon in their attempts to spawn, and now there's
13 hardly anything left. Stories like mine have been
14 told all across the Pacific Northwest. Anyone who's
15 lived here in the past few decades and have had
16 access to historic salmon runs will tell you the
17 same thing: what once was abundant is now absent.
18 And it's not getting any better.

19 Idaho has one of the best spawning grounds
20 left for these fish in the Lower 48 states. We have
21 the ecosystems that can support salmon, but their
22 access to it is blocked and hindered. The current
23 administration has abandoned the Resilient Columbia
24 Basin Agreement, and I am urging you to take action
25 to mitigate further losses. We need elevated

1 spillover dams throughout the summer to protect
2 juvenile salmon, we need to hold the Bonneville Poer
3 Administration accountable, and most of all, we need
4 a plan to remove the Lower Snake River dams.

5 If we continue to ignore this problem, we
6 are effectively saying goodbye to salmon runs in the
7 Pacific Northwest forever. Maybe not now, maybe not
8 tomorrow, but it will happen eventually.

9 Thank you for your time.

10 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you.

11 Mr. Hart, you get the dubious honor of
12 being the last one at the mic.

13 MR. WILL HART: Thank you, sir. Thank
14 you, Councilmembers and especially to Jeff Allen and
15 Ed Schriever, who represent Idaho so well at the
16 Council level.

17 My name is Will Hart, W-I-L-L H-A-R-T.
18 I'm the executive director of the Idaho Consumer and
19 Utilities Association. ICA represents 20 rural
20 electric co-ops and municipal power companies
21 serving the State of Idaho. Collectively, we serve
22 about 140,000 members, and this is in primarily
23 small, rural parts of Idaho and small municipalities
24 where, back during the electrification of the
25 country, the investor-owned utilities were -- were

1 -- were not seeing an ROI to bring power out to, and
2 96 percent of the power that we distribute to our
3 members comes from the Bonneville Power
4 Administration.

5 So the Fish and Wildlife Plan is -- it's
6 very important, not only to our utilities, but the
7 members we serve. These members are, again, in
8 rural and small communities. If you look at a \$30
9 increase in a power bill that was mentioned in
10 earlier testimony, may not be a big deal here in
11 Boise, in my neighborhood, but in Declo or Sagle or
12 Bonners Ferry or Weiser, there are a lot of folks
13 that are not -- that that \$30 does mean a big deal.

14 So as ICA, we ask you to do no harm in a
15 Fish and Wildlife plan. We believe you are on a
16 good path, especially on the PTYP and the -- the
17 reintroduction above -- above Chief Joe, which we've
18 supported, and other appropriations at -- at ICUA
19 and Northwest Power have supported for fish
20 mitigation.

21 Our folks across rural Idaho pay for the
22 Fish and Wildlife Plan. In Washington, in rural
23 Washington, Oregon, and rural Montana, and we're
24 proud of -- of -- of -- of the benefits not only of
25 the hydro-power system to the economic viability of

1 the Pacific Northwest, but also to salmon
2 mitigation. The average adult salmon steelhead
3 returns are nearly three times higher in -- from the
4 first year of operations at the Bonneville Dam in
5 1938 till now. That's progress. Is it perfect?
6 It's not. We need to do -- we -- we need to
7 continue to invest and do better, but active parts
8 of a plan that affect reliability and affordability
9 of the system or -- or -- or things that we will
10 continue to give you comment on and help you
11 mitigate against those river operations hurting the
12 people of Idaho.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. SCHRIEVER: Thank you, Will.

15 Before I thank you all, I want to thank
16 Jeff -- I want to speak on behalf of Jeff and myself
17 and thank our colleagues who came to Idaho because
18 they're interested in broadening the horizon of
19 people that they get to listen to. You all know how
20 hard it can be to travel, and so I appreciate K.C.,
21 Mike, and Les, you taking time to get over here and
22 participate in our meeting.

23 I want to thank you all for your
24 thoughtful comment, especially your ability to stay
25 to three minutes. It was remarkable. It really

1 was. But that's the least of -- of my thanks. Your
2 participation is key. It's important, and mostly,
3 it's appreciated. Thank you for your civility and
4 your participation.

5 We are adjourned.

6 (WHEREUPON, the COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN
7 HEARING concluded at 5:49 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, Greg Salina, do hereby certify that I reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing matter and that the foregoing transcript pages constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said proceedings to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am neither related to counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any interest in the outcome of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 27th of February, 2026.



Greg Salina, CER No. 1441

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