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DRAFT 2026 COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN FISH AND WILDLIFE
PROGRAM

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

HELD ON

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026

4:01 P.M.

PORTLAND, OREGON

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1 APPEARANCES

2
3 NORTHWEST POWER AND CONSERVATION COUNCIL:

4 Mike Milburn, Montana Council Chair

5 Les Purce, Washington Council Vice Chair

6 Margaret Hoffman, Oregon Council, Member

7 Chuck Sams, Oregon Council, Member

8 Jeffery Allen, Idaho Council Member

9 Ed Schriever, Idaho Council Member

10 Douglas Grob, Montana Council Member

11 KC Golden, Washington Council Member

12 Peter Cogswell, Executive Director

13 John Shurts, General Counsel

14 Patty O'Toole, Fish and Wildlife Division Director

15 Kym Buzdygon, Public Affairs Division Director

16 Chad Madron, Senior Division Coordinator

17 Kendra Coles, Senior Group Assistant

18 Peter Jensen, Communications Specialist

19 Rudy Salakory, Policy Analyst

20
21 PUBLIC COMMENTERS:

22 Fred Heutte, NW Energy Coalition

23 Austin Rohr, Northwest River Partners

24 John Rosapepe

25 Tom Iverson, Yakima Nation Fisheries

APPEARANCES (CONTINUED)

PUBLIC COMMENTERS:

Abby Dalke, Save Our Wild Salmon

Tyler Troelsen, Save Our Wild Salmon & Sierra Club
of Washington

Lindsay Schuelke, Pacific Rivers

Liz Hamilton, Northwest Sport Fishing Industry
Association

Tim Emineth

Scott Levy, BlueFish

Alison Longley

Marjorie Millner

Lauren Churchill

Carra Sahler, Green Energy Institute

Steve Taylor, Cowlitz PUD

Craig Lacy, Indivisible of Bend

Jeffrey Hammarlund

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7
8 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you all so much
9 for coming. My name is Margie Hoffman. I am one of
10 the Oregon members on the Northwest Power Planning
11 and Conservation Council.

12 And I just want to say thank you to
13 everybody here in the room and online that has come
14 to provide us with your public comments today. I'd
15 like to welcome you officially to today's public
16 hearing on the Council's Draft 2026 Columbia River
17 Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.

18 Anyone wishing to provide public comment
19 should sign up on the list provided at the back of
20 the room. When time comes to hear your comments,
21 I'll call people up to testify in the order that you
22 signed up.

23 As the first order of business, I have a
24 statement I'd like to make for the administrative
25 record about this public hearing.

1 Under the Northwest Power Act, the
2 Northwest Power and Conservation Council adopts and
3 periodically amends a program to protect, mitigate,
4 and enhance fish and wildlife, affected by the
5 development and operation of hydroelectric
6 facilities on the Columbia River and its
7 tributaries.

8 The current version of the program is the
9 2014 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program
10 with a 2020 addendum. The Council is in the process
11 of amending this Fish and Wildlife Program and a
12 formal amendment process under the act. We recently
13 released a Draft of the 2026 Fish and Wildlife
14 Program.

15 The Council is now at a stage of the
16 amendment process where we are receiving public
17 comment on that Draft Fish and Wildlife Program.
18 The formal comment period extends until March 2nd of
19 2026. And the Council is conducting public hearings
20 like this one to receive oral comments on the draft.

21 We have a court reporter in attendance to
22 record your comments. Thank you so much for joining
23 us this evening.

24 The transcript of this hearing will be
25 circulated to all council members and staff and will

1 be included in the administrative record for this
2 program amendment process. The Council is also
3 accepting written comments on the Draft Fish and
4 Wildlife Program until March 2nd, 2026.

5 Instructions for how to comment in writing are on
6 the Council's website, and you can also ask any
7 staff in this room.

8 If I could have all the staff in this
9 room, please raise your hands. Thank you very much.

10 The Council will consider all the oral and
11 written comments on the Draft Program when making a
12 final decision on the 2026 Fish and Wildlife
13 Program. The Council is expecting to make a
14 decision on the final program in May of this year.

15 So thank you again for being here, and
16 I'll turn it over to Patty.

17 PATTY O'TOOLE: Thank you, Madam Chair.
18 Welcome, everybody. Glad you're here. And welcome
19 to those on the phone.

20 And I want to doublecheck. Kendra, we do
21 have the phone broadcasting and all that, right?
22 Everything's working? Okay. Thank you.

23 Well, good evening. Welcome to our public
24 hearing on the Northwest Power and Conservation
25 Council's Draft 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program.

1 My name is Patty O'Toole and I'm part of
2 the Council staff. I am going to give a short
3 presentation on the Council, on the Fish and
4 Wildlife Program and then turn it back to the chair
5 to open it up for public comment.

6 This is kind of helpful in a couple ways.
7 It lets people still kind of come in, find their
8 seat, and get signed up. So just remember, sign up
9 at the back of the room if you would like to make
10 public comment or sign up online. If you're
11 listening and you decide you want to make public
12 comment, you send an email to meeting organizer.
13 All those instructions are on the website.

14 So just a quick overview of the Council
15 for those who may not be familiar with who we are
16 and what we do.

17 So the Council was created by Congress
18 under the Northwest Power Act of 1980 to give the
19 Pacific Northwest a greater voice in power planning
20 and protecting fish and wildlife. The Council is an
21 interstate compact agency representing the basin
22 states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

23 The governor of each state appoints two
24 council members, and today we have a full complement
25 of council members from all of the states. We have

1 six here in the room, and I believe we have two
2 listening online. The Northwest Power Act requires
3 the Council to develop with public participation, a
4 regional power plan, and a Fish and Wildlife
5 Program.

6 Federal agencies, including the Bonneville
7 Power Administration, the Bureau of Reclamation, the
8 Army Corps of Engineers, and the Federal Energy
9 Regulatory Commission, all have legal
10 responsibilities under the act.

11 What do we do? The Council's Fish and
12 Wildlife Program is updated about every five years,
13 based primarily on the recommendations from state
14 and federal fish and wildlife agencies and the
15 region's tribes, along with other partners as
16 directed by the Northwest Power Act.

17 The program is intended to protect,
18 mitigate, and enhance all fish and wildlife impacted
19 by the hydropower system. It includes onsite
20 mitigation measures at the dams, like -- like
21 changes to flow and passage and offsite mitigation
22 measures like habitat restoration and artificial
23 production.

24 The Fish and Wildlife Program amendment
25 process is completed first and becomes an element of

1 the power plan primarily through changes to the
2 hydropower system to benefit fish. The Council is
3 required to balance through the power plan process
4 where we put forward a strategy that ensures the
5 region stays adequate while firming up and
6 committing to these operations that are critical to
7 our responsibility to mitigate for fish and
8 wildlife.

9 Congress anticipated in passing the Power
10 Act, this one -- in passing the Power Act. The act
11 assumes that we would reduce generating capability
12 and contains mechanisms to address that on the power
13 system side.

14 All right. Oops, sorry. Jumped ahead.
15 The role of power planning, it's not my specialty,
16 but I want to just cover it quickly.

17 The Council must develop a 20-year
18 regional power plan to ensure an adequate,
19 efficient, economical, and reliable power supply for
20 the Pacific Northwest. The Council considers how
21 much energy the region will need and what resources
22 are available to meet that need, beginning with
23 energy efficiency.

24 The power plan guides Bonneville Power
25 Administration's acquisition of cost-effective

1 resources, and it serves as an important technical
2 resource for the region. Power plan is reviewed
3 every five years. The draft of the next power plan,
4 which will be called the Ninth Power Plan, is
5 expected in mid-2026.

6 As with the Fish and Wildlife Program,
7 there'll be multiple opportunities for public
8 comment on the power plan, and we hope to hear from
9 you all then as well. Okay. Something keeps
10 bouncing around here. All right.

11 So a little bit on the Fish and Wildlife
12 Program amendment process. We have six steps to
13 this process. We began this back last year with
14 step one when we called for amendment
15 recommendations. We received public comment on the
16 recommendations. We reviewed the recommendations
17 and the comments and prepared a draft.

18 And we're here at step four seeking public
19 review and comment, holding hearings and
20 consultations, and seeking written comment. We will
21 then develop and adopt the final amendments. And
22 then the final step is developing and adopting the
23 findings and a response to the recommendations and
24 comments. And that will happen a few months after
25 the final draft is adopted.

1 A timeline for this process. We're trying
2 to reach that final step, which is adopting the
3 final program in May and the findings in July. Our
4 comment for deadline on -- for making comments that
5 we're talking about today is March 2nd of this year.

6 All right. A little bit more on the
7 Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. So the first
8 program was adopted in 1982, and the program has
9 evolved and grown since then. It's been a steady
10 and dependable mitigation program. We've seen many
11 programs and initiatives come and go over the
12 decades, but the program has remained steady and
13 durable. We've seen progress.

14 We've conducted an extensive review of the
15 program since its inception, its measures, its
16 goals, and objectives. We believe we're making
17 important strides for salmon, steelhead, lamprey,
18 resident fish, and wildlife. We know there's still
19 significant work to do. We have not met all of our
20 objectives, and we know some salmon populations are
21 still struggling, and we recognize that in the Draft
22 Program.

23 Organization of the Draft Program. If you
24 looked through it, just want to give you some
25 highlights. It addresses both onsite actions,

1 mitigation actions, and offsite mitigation actions.
2 It's organized into some of these categories.
3 You'll see measures related to the hydro system, to
4 habitat protection and restoration, to artificial
5 production, and to adaptive management.

6 Some of the accomplishments of the program
7 through time have been significant. We've seen
8 changes to how the hydro system operates, as well as
9 improved passage at dams, which have benefited adult
10 and juvenile salmon since the program's first
11 program in 1982.

12 Habitat has been protected, restored, and
13 -- and improved for hundreds of thousands of acres
14 of land. We've seen water transactions in the
15 program, which collaborated with willing landowners
16 and irrigation districts to keep water in streams
17 when fish need it. Artificial production programs
18 support both conservation and harvest objectives.

19 We've seen the placement of over 1,800
20 fish screens to keep fish out of irrigation systems,
21 and that's just a few of the highlights.

22 In the Draft Fish and Wildlife Program
23 process we received hundreds of recommendations and
24 thousands of comments so far from this amendment
25 process, and the Council has considered them

1 carefully over the last six months. Some of the
2 recommendations suggested new actions and many built
3 upon the substantial work that has been implemented
4 across the basin for 40 years.

5 Over the course of this review, some
6 topics were identified as being of particular
7 urgency or importance to the region. The Council
8 identified some of these as near-term priorities,
9 but that should not be taken to mean that the
10 Council places less value on other parts of the
11 program. We're just placing particular emphasis on
12 coordinating with other relevant agencies as-needed.

13 So the priorities for the Draft Program
14 include making sure that assets and program projects
15 have the funding they need to continue to function
16 and benefit fish, where the priorities note that we
17 need to have consistent and stable hydro operations
18 over a longer period of time to keep water moving,
19 increase velocities, minimize fluctuations.

20 The program calls for assessing and
21 managing predation in the areas that are most likely
22 to increase salmon and steelhead survival, and
23 continuing the crucial habitat work that is a
24 cornerstone of the Council's program.

25 So a little bit about how it's going to

1 work today. Please sign up on the sheets in the
2 back of the room or online and look for council
3 staff. If you have questions, we have these blue
4 lanyards today, and we can help you with anything.
5 There's a number of us around. Please be courteous
6 to council members, to staff, and to each other.

7 We want to keep this hearing positive and
8 friendly. We ask you to keep your comments brief
9 and on topic. Please note that your comments will
10 become part of the official record, and if you've
11 brought written copies of your comments please hand
12 that to staff after you speak. We'll make sure they
13 get to the court reporter and also into our record.

14 You can always submit comments online.
15 We've got QR codes around. In fact, I think we
16 might even have one there. We do. If people want
17 to submit online, they can just go to our -- our
18 website that way.

19 Room logistics. There is water in the
20 back. There are restrooms. There's a women's
21 restroom in the hallway right outside the door, and
22 then there's a men's restroom just on the other side
23 of the elevators. You go past the elevators, take a
24 left and you'll be there. So with that, we want to
25 hear from you all. So I'm going to turn it back to

1 the chair and we will begin.

2 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you so much,
3 Director O'Toole. A couple of other things. We'll
4 have people -- you have four minutes to testify. So
5 at three minutes, I will let you know that you have
6 a minute left and then ask you to wrap it up at the
7 end of four minutes.

8 I would also say if somebody has made one
9 of the points that you were going to make prior, if
10 you could concur with that point and then move on to
11 those things specifically that you want to highlight
12 that are different about what you're presenting,
13 that would be great. And I would also ask that you
14 don't read your written comments.

15 We will get your written comments and
16 process them and go through them as part of our
17 process, but ask that you limit your oral comments
18 to things that you would like to highlight in your
19 written comments.

20 So with that, we will begin. First up
21 we'll have Fred Heutte, and then on deck we'll have
22 Austin Rohr and then John Rosapepe. So if all three
23 of you wanted to come to the table, that would be
24 great. Thank you so much.

25 THE REPORTER: I would like to take this

1 opportunity to ask everyone who's going to speak
2 today to please state and spell your first and last
3 name before your statement. I have put a piece of
4 paper up there to remind everyone. Thank you very
5 much.

6 FRED HEUTTE: Good afternoon. First, I
7 want to do a mic check to make sure I'm close enough
8 -- close enough.

9 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Yes. Thank you, sir.

10 FRED HEUTTE: Thank you. My name is Fred
11 Heutte. Fred, F-R-E-D. Heutte, H-E-U-T-T-E.
12 Representing the Northwest Energy Coalition. We're
13 very pleased to -- I've got the hot seat, I guess,
14 being the first in this process.

15 The coalition is an alliance of over 100
16 environmental community, other organizations,
17 utilities, local government agencies, and businesses
18 in the four Northwest states in British Columbia.
19 We also have several hundred individual members.

20 The coalition advances clean, equitable,
21 and affordable energy policies and planning to
22 equitably meet the needs of all Northwest people.
23 Bring economic value to communities across our
24 region and address the challenges of climate change
25 and preserve the region's natural resources.

1 We were formed in 1981, in part, to
2 address the Northwest Power Act and the activities
3 of the Power Council. And now we have been involved
4 throughout an entire period. I have not been
5 involved through the entire period, even though I
6 was at the very first meeting of the Council.

7 And we are also now involved in utility
8 state and regional energy policy and power
9 transmission and distribution planning. So we hope
10 that we can provide useful input on the Fish and
11 Wildlife Program amendment. We commend the Council,
12 the staff, and the federal state fish and wildlife
13 agencies and the tribes for working together so
14 effectively in providing this draft.

15 In general, Northwest Energy Coalition is
16 very supportive of the Draft Fish and Wildlife
17 Program Amendment. Two particularly notable
18 components. First, the focus on fully including
19 hydro operations in the Fish and Wildlife Amendment.
20 It's been a long time -- long time coming, and we
21 can see the real value of now doing that.

22 Secondly, is the focus on consistency in
23 river flows, in program design and implementation,
24 in -- presumably in funding and in regional
25 consistent support for this really important effort

1 to retain and improve our fish and wildlife
2 resources that have been affected by the hydro
3 system.

4 We start with the requirement of the
5 Northwest Power Act, that the federal hydro system
6 be operated "in a manner that provides equitable
7 treatment for such fish wildlife with -- with --
8 with the other purposes for which such system and
9 facilities are managed and operated."

10 The main stem hydro fish and passage
11 operation section of the Fish and Wildlife Program
12 amendment is the part I want to focus on starting by
13 quoting the first two recommendations.

14 H1, prioritize operations and dam
15 modifications that produce the flow, passage, and
16 habitat conditions that best fit the natural
17 behavior patterns of native fish.

18 MARGARET HOFFMAN: One minute.

19 FRED HEUTTE: Second, to manage hydro
20 system operations to support a biological diversity
21 by minimizing the artificial selection or limitation
22 of life history traits. There are many important
23 recommendations throughout the -- for the entire
24 system and throughout the year, but obviously the
25 attention is focusing on one particular

1 recommendation that's in H52 on summer spill
2 especially in August.

3 The strength of the salmon, especially
4 wild salmon, is their genetic diversity. The
5 ability to recover fully sustainable stocks depends
6 on that diversity. And for certain of our stocks,
7 August fish flow and ability for passage is
8 critically important to maintain future -- current
9 and future viability. To be sure August can also be
10 stressful on the power system as well as on fish.

11 There's a growing range of clean energy
12 options, including peak targeted energy efficiency,
13 to demand response, load flexibility, and geothermal
14 that we can now take advantage of to assist with
15 that and have a dual win both for our power system,
16 our reliability, and our fish and wildlife
17 resources.

18 In conclusion the -- the full program
19 amendment is a tremendous opportunity to set the
20 stage for the Ninth Plan to align our power and fish
21 planning and implementation going forward. And we
22 thank you very much.

23 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Huetten.
24 Austin.

25 AUSTIN ROHR: For the record, my name is

1 Austin, A-U-S-T-I-N. And last name is Rohr. It's
2 spelled R-O-H-R. Well, thank you Chair Milburn,
3 Member Hoffman, and Members of the Council for the
4 opportunity and time to provide comments today.
5 Firstly, I do just want to share our appreciation
6 for the hard work that both yourselves and all the
7 Council staff here in the room have poured into this
8 process over the past few months.

9 I've been in the room for many of the work
10 sessions leading up to the release of the draft, and
11 I've seen just some of the effort that you all have
12 put into this. And so I really do want to commend
13 you for the Fish and Wildlife Program Draft that
14 you've all released.

15 I just want to provide context today. We
16 don't have comments at this time specific to any
17 items, particularly in the program, but as you know
18 from our recommendations and from our comments
19 previously, Northwest River Partners represents
20 members in all four of the states that you
21 represent.

22 Each year, we have conducted a survey of
23 Northwest residents in all four of those states to
24 better understand the region's perspectives on
25 energy and hydropower. One of the questions in that

1 survey asked respondents to pick their top two
2 energy concerns from a list.

3 In years past, respondents to that survey
4 have always chosen climate change as their largest
5 concern about energy. But in 2024, for the first
6 time, our respondents chose the cost of energy as
7 their top concern.

8 In 2025, that gap between energy costs and
9 climate change has now widened, and we are seeing
10 that 9 out of 10 residents in the Northwest are
11 concerned about the affordability of energy over all
12 other concerns listed. Their concerns about
13 affordability though aren't just a feeling. It's
14 not something that they're perceiving about the
15 world around them.

16 In 2015, Washington State boasted the most
17 affordable retail electric rates in the United
18 States. As of the most recent energy information
19 administration's data in 2024, Washington is now
20 ranked 13th and Oregon is trailing behind at 22nd
21 out of all 50 states.

22 Year over year, we also saw from the EIA,
23 that Washington's retail rates rose an average of
24 8.4 percent, and Oregon's rose 15.5 percent. Those
25 vastly outpaced inflation and the US average

1 increase, which was just 2.1 percent.

2 We've worked with both community action
3 agencies and food banks who have shared that these
4 increases are directly resulting in more people
5 seeking public assistance to meet their everyday
6 needs. I bring this all to your attention as it
7 relates to the Fish and Wildlife Program because as
8 you've discussed many times throughout this process,
9 one of the principles that the Council follows is
10 AEERPS.

11 And one of the ease in AEERPS is
12 economical. While we haven't had time to fully
13 analyze the new hydro system operations, one of the
14 things that we are concerned about is their
15 potential to raise costs for rate payers across the
16 northwest.

17 MARGARET HOFFMAN: One minute.

18 AUSTIN ROHR: Thank you. And more
19 concerningly, we have seen and expect more calls for
20 each you all to accept a full suite of
21 recommendations, which would be similar to those in
22 a preliminary injunction currently being weighed in
23 the federal court system, which could raise rates by
24 over 17 percent according to BPA's numbers.

25 It's our view that while there is no

1 standard or test for what is deemed economical under
2 AEERPS, as you all have discussed, any significant
3 cost increases imposed in the midst of what we feel
4 is a true affordability crisis in our region would
5 not be appropriate.

6 And we are asking you to consider this as
7 you weigh the many decisions that you are weighing
8 throughout this process between now and the adoption
9 of the final program.

10 Once again, I do appreciate your time and
11 I look forward to working with you all throughout
12 this process. And that includes the public comment
13 period, which we will be submitting written comments
14 by March 2nd, and I also hope that you all will
15 reach out to us as a resource. Thank you.

16 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Austin.
17 John.

18 JOHN ROSAPEPE: Yeah. My -- sorry. My
19 name is John Rosapepe. It's J-O-H-N R-O-S-A-P-E-P-
20 E. I represent me, myself, and I. And -- but I've
21 been through all four states. I'd like to thank the
22 chair, Members from Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and
23 Washington to having public testimony and allowing
24 me to talk.

25 I was lucky to grow up with parents and

1 grandparents who took us fishing. It was a big part
2 of our fabric of our family being together and also
3 for putting food on the table. I was also lucky
4 that I had a career as a fisheries biologist and
5 also did some stints, commercial fishing.

6 And over 40 years ago, I was a barge rider
7 for the Army Corps of Engineers taking small --
8 through the dams from the Snake and Columbia River.
9 The reason I'm here today, instead of being out on
10 river in a beautiful day is that it's -- salmon are
11 so important to this region. I mean, this is part
12 of our identity.

13 I'm in my 70s now and I've watched, you
14 know, people when I came here, just how salmon is so
15 inbred and intertwined in our lives. And we face a
16 crisis on the Columbian Snake River.

17 I want to thank the -- the staff for all
18 their work they've done. The Draft Program does
19 several good things, including the long-held
20 recovery goals of five million salmon returning
21 annually to the Columbia River Basin. This plan
22 provides an opportunity for our region to charter
23 course towards affordable, efficient, reliable
24 energy that also protects and restores harvest --
25 harvestable, and abundant salmon.

1 It's not just good enough to say, "Oh, we
2 have some salmon left." We need to return it to our
3 recovery so that people can harvest and have it part
4 of the culture. A gentleman has already mentioned
5 about the August flows. That's what I was going to
6 talk about, but since he always does, there should
7 be flows through August.

8 Instead of deferring some of the most
9 important fish recovery measures to other processes
10 that have failed. And I'll speak about it, you
11 know, when I was a barge rider over 40 years ago, it
12 was like, "Oh, this will -- this will change
13 things." I'm still barging salmon and it hasn't
14 worked. And every year it's like, "Well, maybe
15 we'll do something a little bit better, a little bit
16 better." And that hasn't gotten us anywhere.

17 So thank you very much. I hope after
18 listening testimony and -- and written testimony
19 instead of deferring important fish measures, the
20 Council should adopt all the hydropower operation
21 measures recommended by the federal, state, and
22 tribal fisheries manager, as well as incorporate and
23 fully address those measures in the plan as directed
24 by the act.

25 Thank you for your time. I'm not trying

1 to be rude, but I am going to leave immediately
2 instead of listening to the rest because I volunteer
3 at a food bank. Thank you.

4 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, John. I
5 appreciate that. Okay. Next up we have Tom
6 Iverson, followed by Abby Dalke and Tyler Troelsen,
7 and then we'll go to some people online.

8 TOM IVERSON: Good afternoon everybody.
9 My name's Tom Iverson. That's I-V-E-R-S-O-N. I'm
10 the regional coordinator for Yakima Nation
11 Fisheries. I want to thank you for the opportunity
12 to comment on the Draft Program. I look forward to
13 our dialogue in Yakima.

14 We're going to be meeting with some of you
15 on February 4th if we can get all the logistics put
16 together. I just wanted to provide a few general
17 observations of our preliminary technical review,
18 just to give you a preview of the areas of focus
19 we'll be working on in our formal comments.

20 First off, I want to thank you for this
21 revised program. I think it's a really good job of
22 streamlining the program, making it easier to follow
23 and understand. The addition of the explanatory
24 tests -- text is very helpful and the strong
25 language supporting the whole of government approach

1 and adequate funding is long overdue.

2 I also want to thank the Council for your
3 commitment to facilitating work groups to address
4 the many priority issues such as predator
5 management, habitat, hydro ops, and funding. For
6 now we just see two serious shortcomings of the
7 Draft Program, summer spill and program
8 accountability.

9 Your summer spill measures place all risks
10 of uncertainty on the fish. As I read it, you
11 propose action agencies reduce summer spill on
12 August 1st, which is contrary to the recommendations
13 of the agencies and tribes, and you rely -- rely on
14 in-season management forums to extend this bill date
15 based on real time fish presence.

16 This puts all the risk on the fish and
17 does not provide a transparent balance between fish
18 impacts and hydropower needs. We haven't seen any
19 analysis to support rolling back summer spill either
20 for fish protection or for hydropower requirements.

21 It appears that some of you base this
22 measure on the resilient Columbia Basin Agreement
23 spill date, but that fails to recognize the
24 significant actions that were promised to offset the
25 impacts of reduced spill under that agreement. The

1 additional funding to maintain habitat predator
2 management and correct hatchery deficiencies, all of
3 that funding is no longer available.

4 This measure's contrary to several
5 measures in the program, as were mentioned earlier.
6 This measure's contrary to the existing legal
7 decisions that protect summer spill. This measure's
8 contrary to the biological needs of the fish and is
9 contrary to the recommendations of the agencies and
10 tribes.

11 On program accountability, we appreciate
12 maintaining the five million fish goal, but the
13 program's missing what actions will be taken if the
14 goal isn't met. That's the most important part of
15 adaptive management. What are you going to do when
16 you do your analysis in five years? It's not clear
17 what you intend by saying show meaningful progress
18 towards the goal.

19 We hope it means to achieve five million
20 fish or more returning the Columbia River mouth in
21 the next five years and it'd --

22 MARGARET HOFFMAN: One minute.

23 TOM IVERSON: -- it'd be great if the
24 program could state that explicitly. We also don't
25 see increases in fish abundance. If we don't see

1 the increases, what does the Council propose as a
2 remedy? We'll provide a few suggestions how this
3 could be spelled out more clearly in the adaptive
4 management and the program performance sections of
5 the program. We have a number of corrections and
6 clarifications.

7 Frankly, I characterize them primarily as
8 minor edits. Like I say, the -- the program is
9 really well done. I want to thank you again for the
10 opportunity to comment today. I believe this
11 program's a major improvement from the previous
12 versions and look forward to working with you on
13 these and several other needed edits before you
14 adopt the final version. Thank you.

15 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thanks, Tom. Abby.

16 ABBY DALKE: Hi. My name is Abby Dalke,
17 A-B-B-Y D-A-L-K-E. I'm so grateful to be here with
18 all of you, and thank you for all your hard work on
19 the 2026 Draft Fish Wildlife Plan. And thank you
20 for the opportunity to provide comment today.

21 I am the advocacy and policy coordinator
22 for Save Our Wild Salmon, and we were founded in
23 1991 and we are a coalition of northwest and
24 national conservation organizations, commercial and
25 sports fishing associations and businesses, river

1 groups, clean energy and orca advocates, all working
2 together to protect and restore self-sustaining,
3 abundant, and harvestable populations of salmon and
4 steelhead to the rivers, streams, marine waters of
5 the Pacific salmon states for the benefit of people
6 and ecosystems.

7 I'm here to express strong support for a
8 robust, accountable, and actionable 2026 Fish and
9 Wildlife Program that addresses all measures
10 necessary to mitigate, protect, and restore salmon
11 and steelhead across the Columbia Basin. And I
12 appreciate that the Draft Program upholds the
13 interim goal of five million adult salmon and
14 steelhead returning annually to the Columbia Basin.

15 And it's critical that all measures
16 adopted in the final program are in support of
17 meeting this goal. To that extent, please adopt the
18 full range of measures necessary to mitigate further
19 harm to fish from hydropower operations in the
20 Columbia and Snake Rivers, and make actionable
21 progress towards recovery goals.

22 I urge you all to pay deference to
23 regional, state, and tribal fisheries expert as
24 required by the Power Act, and include elevated
25 levels of spill through August 31st as a priority

1 hydropower operation measure. This is critical to
2 achieve necessary small to adult return rates for
3 wild and natural stocks.

4 As August juvenile salmon migration yields
5 an oversized proportion of wild spawners returning
6 to the Columbia and Snake basins. Please include
7 this and all of the hydro operations necessary
8 recommended by the federal, state, and tribal
9 fisheries managers and incorporate those in -- those
10 measures in the Ninth Power Plan as well.

11 On behalf of our coalition, thank you for
12 developing the program goals and objectives with the
13 spirit of collaboration and mutual accountability by
14 all agencies and parties, including BPA who must be
15 required to uphold tribal treaty rights, fully
16 embrace, and honor their obligation to protect and
17 enhance all fisheries impacted by the hydro system
18 and implement measures with the whole of government
19 approach.

20 While you will make decisions that will
21 directly impact the trajectory of our energy,
22 landscape, and ecosystem health, please reject the
23 false choice between salmon and energy and instead
24 ensure a future -- our future generations of
25 Northwest residents have both healthy and abundant

1 fish as well as affordable, reliable power. Thank
2 you again to the staff, each of you council members
3 for this opportunity to comment.

4 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Abby.

5 TYLER TROELSEN: Hello. I'm Tyler
6 Troelsen, T-Y-L-E-R T-R-O-E-L-S-E-N. Hello and
7 thank you for the opportunity to provide a comment
8 on the 2026 Draft Fish and Wildlife Program. My
9 name is Tyler Rolson. I work with both Save Our
10 Wild Salmon and the Sierra Club Washington State.

11 I appreciate that the Council is hosting
12 this hearing close to Southwest Washington, which
13 often feels excluded from conversations like these.
14 I'm a lifelong Southwest Washingtonian. I have a
15 deep love for this region, its natural beauty, and
16 the shared commitment of its people to protecting
17 our relationship with nature.

18 I also have a strong commitment to
19 environmental justice and community driven advocacy.
20 In my role, I focus on building a broad, diverse
21 coalition to recover wild salmon and steelhead in
22 the Columbia River Basin and to protect our public
23 lands for generations to come.

24 I'm passionate about what I do because I
25 -- like many people across the Columbia Basin, I

1 care deeply about the future of our rivers, our
2 fish, and our communities. I'm here this evening to
3 urge the Council to adopt a 2026 Fish and Wildlife
4 Program that is strong enough to meaningfully --
5 meaningfully improve outcomes for salmon and
6 steelhead.

7 I appreciate the Draft Program maintaining
8 the interim goal of five million adult salmon and
9 steelhead returning annually to the Columbia Basin.
10 However, the question before us is whether the final
11 program will include measures that ensure all large
12 scale collective efforts necessary to achieve that
13 goal within the next 5 to 10 years.

14 A central priority must be rebuilding
15 abundance while protecting the genetic diversity of
16 wild and natural origin fish. The final program
17 should clearly link its objectives and performance
18 measures to outcomes that increase survival,
19 productivity, and long-term resilience.

20 Additionally, juvenile salmon migrate
21 throughout August, makes a -- makes up a
22 disproportionately large share of the wild adults
23 that return to the Columbia and Snake Rivers. To
24 improve small to adult return rates, the program
25 must defer to state and tribal fishery experts as

1 required by the Northwest Power Act and prioritize
2 elevated levels of spill through August 31st as a
3 core operational measure.

4 This is also a moment for accountability.
5 The Fish and Wildlife Program and the Ninth Power
6 Plant together shape how this region balances energy
7 needs with ecological responsibility. Measures that
8 are known to benefit fish should not be deferred to
9 other processes that have failed to deliver results.

10 The Bonneville Power Administration must
11 be -- must be required to uphold tribal treaty
12 rights and fully meet its obligation to protect and
13 enhance fisheries affected by the hydropower system.

14 Thank you to the council members and staff
15 for providing this opportunity to speak. I urge you
16 to adopt a final 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program that
17 includes elevated levels of spill through August
18 31st, so it delivers real progress towards healthy,
19 abundant salmon and steelhead alongside to --
20 alongside affordable and reliable power for the
21 Northwest. Thank you.

22 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Tyler. All
23 right. On deck we have Lindsay Schuelke, Liz
24 Hamilton, and Tim Emineth.

25 THE REPORTER: I'd be happy to keep

1 anybody's paper copy of their comments. Thank you.

2 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you. Lindsay,
3 you're up.

4 LINDSAY SCHUELKE: Okay. I'm Lindsay
5 Schuelke, L-I-N-D-S-A-Y, Schuelke, S-C-H-U-E-L-K-E.
6 Okay. So I am Lindsay Schuelke and I'm here
7 speaking on behalf of Pacific Rivers, a watershed
8 conservation nonprofit based here in Portland and
9 working across the northwest. Our mission is to
10 protect and restore watersheds of the Northwest.

11 And we have over 8,000 people involved
12 that care deeply about the health of our region's
13 fisheries. A specific and well-planned and executed
14 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program is a critical
15 opportunity to protect and restore salmon and
16 steelhead across the Columbia basin.

17 We urge the Council to adopt all of the
18 recommended hydropower operations measures,
19 including those in the Ninth Power Plan as directed
20 by the Northwest Power Act. Which I would like to
21 emphasize states that the program must provide for
22 improved survival of anadromous fish and provide
23 flows sufficient -- of sufficient quality and
24 quantity between such facilities to improve
25 production, migration, and survival of such fish.

1 Further, it must be based on and supported
2 by the best available science and consistent with
3 the legal rights of tribes in the region. The
4 emphasis there on improving -- improving survival at
5 the facilities with the goal of five million
6 returning adult salmon and steelhead will require
7 the use of all options necessary.

8 Two of the most urgent that we see
9 include, one, elevating the levels of spill through
10 August 31st as a priority operations measure, which
11 can improve the small to adult return rates for wild
12 salmon stocks as mentioned by others. And then also
13 with the context of treating the -- the river and
14 its tributaries as a system and based on the best
15 available science that the science is clearly
16 showing that salmon are at risk of extinction.

17 And one of the apex threats of salmon at
18 this time are this Lower Snake River Dams. So the
19 largest possible impact for the recovery of salmon
20 should include that option. This is a necessary
21 action to achieve the Council's five million fish
22 goal. And in the 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program
23 final the Council could include this as a necessary
24 measure and also for consideration in the Ninth
25 Power Plan.

1 Thank you to all the staff and council who
2 are working on this and for the opportunity to speak
3 about the urgency and importance of adopting a 2026
4 fish and wildlife plan that will ensure abundant
5 fish and reliable power for our region's energy
6 needs.

7 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you so much,
8 Lindsay. Hi, Liz.

9 LIZ HAMILTON: Hi. This is Liz Hamilton,
10 H-A-M-I-L-T-O-N, and I'm the policy director for the
11 Northwest Sport Fishing Industry Association. And
12 Chair -- Chair Milburn and Director Cogswell and
13 Honorable Council Members, wow, I first have to say
14 thank you. I think I've been here every moment
15 through your workshops and your meetings, and you
16 have some long days ahead of you, and I appreciate
17 that you're staying late tonight and we have many
18 more in front of you. So thank you.

19 The old lady here is going to start way
20 back. In the 1990s before the initiation of
21 substantial hatchery releases, and on average there
22 were about 25 percent of fall Chinook that migrated
23 past lower granite dam after August 1st, 25 percent.
24 These out-migrants were -- primarily ended up being
25 ESA listed wild fall Chinook. So by very

1 definition, what a small number.

2 After the large scale hatchery releases
3 started in 2000, these percentages -- and remember,
4 we -- you guys talked about using a percentage to
5 turn off spill. After the large scale releases
6 start in 2000, these percentages dropped to 6
7 percent in comparison to the overall releases.

8 There is nothing to suggest that the timing of these
9 naturally produced fall Chinook has changed in the
10 interim.

11 These late migrating fall Chinook, which
12 based on historical passage data, are highly likely
13 to be wild fall Chinook from the Clearwater and
14 mainstem Snake contributes significantly and
15 disproportionately to adult returns. Wild fall
16 Chinook that were detected at the Snake River
17 Project after August 1st make up nearly 20 percent
18 of returning adults detected at Bonneville between
19 2015 and '23.

20 So to sum up, about 6 percent of fall
21 Chinook migrant that migrate past lower granite
22 after August 1st make up about 20 percent of
23 returning adults, likely because they still make up
24 a substantial component of wild stock.

25 Additionally, there is increasing evidence that

1 transported fall Chinook experience worse survival
2 and migratory outcomes than their in-river
3 counterparts.

4 So the reliance on transport after August
5 1st will remain a serious concern. Again, key
6 points, using a proportion as a determinant for not
7 spilling in August ignores the fact that the number
8 of ESA listed wild out-migrants is small, and that
9 the proportion has been decreased over the past 25
10 years by how tree out plants.

11 These out plants that have bolstered runs
12 and fisheries are critically important, make no
13 mistake, but using those releases as an excuse to
14 ignore wild fish is dooming them both. Second,
15 these late migrating fish are overrepresented in
16 adult returns. They're punching way above their
17 weight class. And third, out-migrants that succeed
18 in these warm waters may hold a key to a warming
19 future.

20 MARGARET HOFFMAN: One minute.

21 LIZ HAMILTON: The genetic diversity in
22 the so-called tale of these Snake River wild fall
23 Chinook is not only worth its weight in gold, it's
24 priceless. I understand that there are provisions
25 for curtailing spill during power emergencies for

1 human safety. It is necessary that these safeguards
2 remain in place.

3 But remember, fall Chinook don't have air
4 conditioners to depend on. They just have us and
5 our actions. In order to do responsible power
6 planning for the Ninth Plan, we must model
7 aggressive non-breach measures to meet abundant
8 goals while providing reliable and affordable
9 energy.

10 You can find that path. I have every
11 confidence. But if we are truly to serve the
12 region's fish and energy future, we should review
13 both breach and non-breach alternatives in our
14 considerations. I have lots of good things to say.

15 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Liz, I just want to let
16 you know you're out of time. So I ask to wrap it
17 up.

18 LIZ HAMILTON: Real fast.

19 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you.

20 LIZ HAMILTON: Okay. I -- I have lots of
21 good things to say about what you did, and I will
22 put them in writing much more extensive comments.
23 So thank you for the opportunity today.

24 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you so much.

25 LIZ HAMILTON: Thank you.

1 TIM EMINETH: My name is -- excuse me,
2 sorry. My name is Tim Emineth, E-M-I-N-E-T-H. I'm
3 a basically a lifelong member of -- resident of
4 Vancouver, Washington.

5 For 16 years I lived along the Washougal
6 River. In 1972, a girlfriend's father taught me to
7 steelhead fish. So that's where my passion for save
8 the fish or save what -- save a lot of things.
9 We're -- we're in deep. And to be here, it's -- I
10 don't have any notes because I'm speaking from my
11 heart.

12 It makes me sad to even be here, to still
13 have to be doing this. You guys said that this
14 started in 1980, and so here we are 45 years later
15 and it's still a mess. All you got to do is read
16 the Lewis & Clark Journals and see what they were --
17 what they saw as they came along, of all the fish
18 that were along the river on racks drying.

19 And then if we would just honor our -- the
20 -- the treaty rights, it was already mentioned about
21 the treaties for the -- for the natives, we'd have
22 more fish. There's hardly any fish left on the
23 Washougal. And now under Trump's administration,
24 they did -- they cut funding for the Skamania
25 Hatchery.

1 So is the state of Washington going to
2 step up and -- and spend the money? No. The
3 hatchery's closing. And so I was out looking last
4 year, last summer of where to go fishing because I'm
5 getting old and I -- I sold the boat because it
6 didn't -- the drift boat, it didn't make sense to
7 have a boat anymore.

8 And I wanted to go see where I could go
9 maybe get -- get down with my bad knees down to the
10 river. I ran into a couple of young guys talking to
11 them. They said that the -- one of them was -- had
12 some sort of a drug problem. He said the fishing
13 had saved him from his drugs. When I was young, it
14 -- it kept me out of the bars a lot.

15 I still went, but it kept me out of it a
16 lot. It -- it just -- it just makes me sad to be
17 here that after 45 years we're still talking about
18 it. I've done a lot of different things, different
19 groups to plant trees along the sides of the river
20 and put debris in the river for the -- the smolts to
21 have a place to hide. I also was a part of the
22 problem of Bonneville Dam.

23 I spent four years making that second
24 powerhouse, but I also worked on one of the fish
25 bypasses. But -- so I thank you for letting me come

1 and talk to you. But are you guys proud of what's
2 happened in 45 years to make -- is the fishing
3 better? I tell you no. And you can go look at the
4 price of fish.

5 I can't -- I can't go fish and catch fish
6 and I can't afford to buy the fish. So that's all
7 I've got to say. Thank you for what, hopefully
8 you're trying to get done, but I don't see it.
9 Thank you for letting me come and grip.

10 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you so much, Tim.
11 Okay. We're going to go to some folks that we have
12 online. All right. So first we'll do Scott Levy
13 and on deck we have Alison Longley and Marjorie
14 Millner. Scott, you're -- the floor is yours.

15 CHAD MADRONE: He hasn't been unmuted yet.

16 SCOTT LEVY: Yeah, thanks. The -- I
17 probably going to have to put this in writing, but
18 give the quick skim of what I learned from some of
19 the science that I read after James Faulkner's
20 declaration in the case. So the language, it has
21 consistent spill.

22 We might want to think about consistent
23 flow regime. So it's not -- you know, this idea of
24 like let's do this experiment on spill. It's going
25 to be a hard time teasing out its ability if you're

1 not really careful with how that experiment's
2 designed. So I'm going to refer to a experiment.

3 When they were testing the lower granite
4 bypass system in 2018, and they were -- the PNNL
5 people were surprised. I think the word was
6 unexpected result. They -- for whatever reason,
7 right before the summer passage season started Army
8 Corps engineers shut down lower granite to zero.
9 They was running at 250.

10 And then it went to zero production. And
11 instead of increasing the flow, the water bounced
12 off the wall and now everything's moving upstream.
13 So all the Chinook are getting lost. So if you're
14 going to shut down your generator, you need to
15 increase.

16 So the down -- the flow of the river stays
17 constant because when you're having these bathtub
18 effects, you end up killing your fish. And so they
19 didn't actually meet the performance standard. You
20 know, it was 92 percent and they didn't make 92
21 percent. So 8 percent of the fish died with these
22 issues.

23 So I'm going to try to get the specific
24 example for you all to read, but the main point is
25 it's not just consistent spill regime, which was

1 consistent that day, but the flow down river was
2 inconsistent and resulted in not meeting the
3 performance standard 8 percent mortality. Thanks.

4 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Scott. And
5 I just want to remind people to -- people to please
6 spell your name before you start. Alison, you're up
7 next. Anybody would like to sing the Jeopardy theme
8 song? I would -- actually, if you guys could do it
9 in a two-part round, that would be great.

10 KC GOLDEN: Taj Mahal, Fishing Blues.

11 KENDRA COLES: For some reason we're not
12 allowed to unmute Alison. Okay.

13 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Alison, we are not
14 allowed to unmute you from our side. Can you try
15 unmuting yourself? Okay. Let's --

16 DR. ALISON LONGLEY: Okay.

17 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Oh, there we go.

18 DR. ALISON LONGLEY: Yeah. Thank you.

19 MARGARET HOFFMAN: The floor is yours,
20 Alison.

21 DR. ALISON LONGLEY: Oh, thank you. Yes.
22 I'm Dr. Alison Longley. I'm talking to you from San
23 Juan Island. Thank you for this opportunity to
24 speak. I also appreciate the opportunity to examine
25 the Draft 19th -- or 2026 Columbia River base on

1 Fish and Wildlife Program.

2 Clearly, an impressive amount of work has
3 gone into this draft. Many actions are proposed to
4 improve survival of the imperial salmon and
5 steelhead and other species. It acknowledges that
6 hydropower is a major factor in the loss of fish and
7 the importance of the treaty rights of the tribes.

8 It also acknowledges the importance of
9 power to our region. The proposed actions include
10 many aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of
11 hydroelectric dams. They include acquiring salmon
12 carcasses from sources such as hatcheries to be
13 placed in local watersheds to increase the amount of
14 marine divide nutrients with many beneficial
15 effects.

16 And the link to this -- this habitat
17 measures list including the Lower Snake, is on page
18 79 HAB 47. Note also that part of the predator
19 problem that's mentioned is the artificial slowing
20 of our downstream migration and hot spots for
21 predation including (audio disruption) -- the deeply
22 establishing salmon where they've been (audio
23 disruption) for reestablishing should be considered
24 or deemed feasible. One highly effective potential
25 action is never mentioned. The elephant in the room

1 is the potential to restore free-flowing Snake River
2 by reaching the four -- breaching the four Lower
3 Snake River Dams.

4 And I argue that this program is indeed
5 feasible. Would eliminating power from the LSR dams
6 adversely affect power in the Northwest? No, they
7 produce about 4 percent of our region's power,
8 mostly in the spring when it's (audio disruption).
9 And this power can be replaced with conservation and
10 rain sources.

11 In addition, by not having to replace the
12 aging and expensive turbines associated with these
13 dams, the corps of engineer can save considerably on
14 maintenance, reducing the cost of our power. When
15 reviewed as a realistic option, recreating a free-
16 flowing Lower Snake River Dam or Lower Snake River
17 makes many actions that are aimed at mitigation of
18 the adverse effects of the dam look like a Rube
19 Goldberg machine.

20 Rivers are the best hatchers. Salmon
21 migration will be speeded considerably in both
22 directions. Predation hotspots will disappear as
23 salmon can once more reach their upper river
24 birthplaces to spawn, their spent bodies will
25 provide the marine derived nutrients that the upland

1 parts presently lack at considerably less expense
2 than the proposed artificial distribution of fish
3 carcasses.

4 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thirty seconds.

5 DR. ALISON LONGLEY: The LSR dams do
6 provide some services in addition to power. And
7 these can be replaced, recreation will be improved,
8 irrigation can come with deeper wells and stronger
9 pumps. And transportation by rail is an energy
10 efficient alternative to barging that is detailed at
11 solutionaryrail.org LSR Barge to Rail, that's
12 spelled -- sorry, S-O-L-U-T-I-O-N-A-R-Y-R-A-I-L.org.

13 The Draft Program also notes that when
14 hydro development is being considered, the potential
15 effects on fish, tribes, and wildlife should be
16 considered. This should have prevented the Lower
17 Snake River Dams from being built in the first
18 place, but it may not be quite too late to undo the
19 damage. Thank you.

20 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Alison, I'd like to ask
21 you to wrap it up. Thank you so much. Do you have
22 any few closing remarks?

23 KC GOLDEN: (Inaudible) thank you.

24 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Oh, she did?

25 KC GOLDEN: Yeah.

1 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Okay. Sorry, I didn't
2 hear it. Thank you so much, Alison, for your
3 testimony. Next up is Marjorie Millner. And could
4 you please spell your name for us?

5 MARJORIE MILLNER: Hi, you can you hear
6 me?

7 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Yeah.

8 MARJORIE MILLNER: Okay. My name's
9 Marjorie Millner. Last name is M-I-L-L-N-E-R. I'm
10 here to share why I care about salmon recovery and a
11 strong fish and wildlife program. I care about
12 salmon recovery for many reasons. The most basic, I
13 guess, is I love eating salmon.

14 I think it would violate environmental
15 laws, moral laws, and tribal treaties to continue to
16 manage the salmon runs of the Columbia basin to
17 extinction, as has been the status quo for decades.
18 Now, I may love salmon, but I wouldn't die without
19 it.

20 But this is not the case for our southern
21 resident orcas who are starving because of the
22 decrease in Chinook salmon runs, particularly the
23 Spring Chinook runs from the Lower Snake River.
24 These orcas will go extinct if the four Lower Snake
25 River Dams are not breached now.

1 I may be able to substitute other protein
2 in my diet if salmon disappear. But for the tribes
3 of the Columbia Basin, salmon are not just some
4 protein source, they are the bedrock of their
5 culture. There can be no substitute, nor should
6 there have to be.

7 The Nez Perce and other tribes have been
8 guaranteed by treaty to have the right to fish in
9 all their accustomed locations. After signing those
10 treaties, the US then proceeded to overfish and dam
11 up the Columbia basin, even flooding the main
12 fishing area where tribes had gathered for millennia
13 to reap an amazing harvest of salmon, many weighing
14 over 100 pounds.

15 The tribes have been calling for the
16 breaching with the four Lower Snake River Dams for
17 decades, so that their treaty rights may be honored.
18 Over 26 billion dollars has been spent on mitigation
19 efforts which have failed to recover a single
20 endangered salmon species. It is time to breach.

21 So I want the 2026 Fish and Wildlife
22 Program to include the provision that the breaching
23 of the four Lower Snake River Dams must begin within
24 the next five years. And that until breaching,
25 additional spillage must be guaranteed through

1 August 31st of each year to try to prevent the wild
2 fish from going extinct while preparations are made
3 for breaching the for Lower Snake River Dams.

4 It is time for the Council to follow its
5 own directive, to accept the recommendations of
6 tribes and the best scientific analysis, both of
7 which call for breaching. The four Lower Snake
8 River Dams provide less than 4 percent of the
9 northwest grid. This has been pointed out already.

10 This will only decline in coming years
11 because of climate change, which is reducing water
12 flows. Climate change also increases the pressure
13 on the few remaining salmon as they try to navigate
14 super-heated algae choked slack waters behind the
15 dams. It's understood that there are other impacts
16 to Columbia Basin fish and wildlife beyond the hydro
17 system.

18 This only makes it more imperative for the
19 Council to do what is within its control to save our
20 wild salmon runs regardless of what else is going
21 on. The science is firm that the best chance to
22 save our salmon and orcas is to breach the four
23 Lower Snake River Dams. That must be part of the
24 plan going forward.

25 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to

1 comment on your critical work in protecting wildlife
2 from the damages that hydropower causes to our
3 environment. Thank you.

4 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Marjorie.

5 Up next we have Lauren Churchill.

6 LAUREN CHURCHILL: Hello. Can everybody
7 hear me?

8 MARGARET HOFFMAN: We can.

9 LAUREN CHURCHILL: Oh, great.

10 My name is Lauren Churchill. That's L-A-
11 U-R-E-N. And it's C-H-U-R-C-H-I-L-L. I'm speaking
12 as an individual with concerns for and on behalf of
13 the king salmon and the Southern resident whales.

14 I live up on the Olympic Peninsula and the
15 whales are an integral part of our economy and our
16 tourism. And I have recently found out that they
17 are starving and they're starving because they do
18 not have enough of the chinook salmon. I support
19 all the reasonable and actionable measures that are
20 in the 2026 Fish and Wildlife Program.

21 I appreciate all the hard work that's been
22 put in up till now. The interim goal of five
23 million adult salmon is a good start, but the plan
24 must be designed to meet this goal. Not only must
25 there -- must there be elevated levels of spill

1 through August 31st, but the Council should include
2 the removal of all four dams on the Snake River.

3 Science has determined that other recovery
4 processes have failed, and that removal is the only
5 viable method to reach the five million fish goal.
6 In spite of the release of millions of hatchery
7 fish, the Chinook salmon, which are the primary
8 source of food for the southern resident orcas
9 remain on the endangered species list.

10 Removing them or otherwise negating the
11 list, does not erase the fact of their endangered
12 status. The orca are starving for lack of their
13 main food. The small that managed to survive are
14 faced with traversing reservoirs that are super-
15 heated and full of toxic blue-green algae due to
16 climate change.

17 The dams themselves are old and in need of
18 new expensive turbines. And from what I understand,
19 replacing these turbines will cost way more than the
20 removal of these dams. The dams -- okay. I
21 appreciate the emphasis on a spirit of collaboration
22 and mutual accountability by all the agencies and
23 parties, including the Bonneville Power
24 Administration.

25 They must be required to uphold tribal

1 treaty rights. The Council will be embracing and
2 honoring its obligation to prevent -- to protect and
3 enhance fisheries impacted by the hydro system in
4 this way.

5 And I thank you for -- for providing this
6 opportunity for me to speak about the urgency and
7 importance of ensuring both healthy and abundant
8 fish, along with affordable, reliable power to the
9 region and the adoption of a final 2026 Fish and
10 Wildlife Plan.

11 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you so much,
12 Lauren. Carra.

13 CARRA SAHLER: Good afternoon. Thank you
14 for accepting public comment today. My name is
15 Carra Sahler. That's spelled C-A-R-R-A. Last name
16 is S-A-H-L-E-R. I'm the director and staff attorney
17 of the Green Energy Institute at Lewis & Clark Law
18 School.

19 So GEI is a climate policy and energy law
20 program, housed within the law school's
21 environmental natural resources, and energy law
22 program. Our mission is to develop equitable and
23 comprehensive strategies to prevent catastrophic
24 climate change by furthering the just transition to
25 a sustainable carbon-free energy grid.

1 So you might be wondering what is -- what
2 are you doing here today. My comments are not
3 focused on the nuts and bolts of the draft plan.
4 I'm not an expert in this work, which is why I urge
5 you to listen to the experts and approach the 2026
6 Fish and Wildlife Program in a way that addresses
7 all the measures necessary to benefit salmon and
8 steelhead in the region.

9 That's easier said than done. Of course,
10 you are facing requests from all directions making
11 it impossible for you to select exactly the right
12 choice. I have been thinking a lot about trade-offs
13 lately, and when I do that, I like to reread Bill
14 McKibben's guidance about how we approach these
15 tough choices.

16 Bill McKibben, of course, is an author,
17 journalist, and environmentalist and the founder of
18 350. He has five guiding principles and one of them
19 is a reminder that, "All of us focus on the present
20 and the future, but sometimes that's a way of
21 avoiding accountability for the past."

22 And he reminds us that repeating the
23 mistakes of our history at this point is truly
24 unforgivable. So to that end, please do not defer
25 any fish recovery measures. We owe it to our

1 tribes. The Council should adopt all of the
2 hydropower operation measures recommended by the
3 federal, state, and tribal fisheries managers, the
4 true experts here, and incorporate and fully address
5 the hydropower operation measures in the Ninth Power
6 Plan.

7 Additionally, of course, please ensure
8 that BPA fully honors its obligation to uphold the
9 tribal treaty rights to benefit salmon. Thank you
10 so much for your time today.

11 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Carra. Up
12 next we have Steve Taylor.

13 STEVE TAYLOR: Oh, thank you. Can you
14 hear me?

15 MARGARET HOFFMAN: We can.

16 STEVE TAYLOR: All right. Wonderful.
17 Well thank you, Chair Milburn, and Members of the
18 Council for the opportunity to comment today on the
19 Draft Program.

20 For the record, my name is Steve Taylor,
21 S-T-E-V-E T-A-Y-L-O-R. I'm Director of Regulatory
22 and Regional Affairs for Cowlitz County Public
23 Utility District Number 1, also known as Cowlitz
24 PUD.

25 We provide clean, reliable, and affordable

1 electricity to approximately 54,000 residential,
2 commercial, and industrial customers in Cowlitz
3 County, which is located in Southwest Washington.
4 We appreciate the Council's significant time and
5 effort invested to prepare the Draft Program, along
6 with the consideration of stakeholder input you've
7 already received over the past year.

8 The final program's outcomes will help
9 determine the implementation of fish and wildlife
10 protection, mitigation, and enhancement actions, as
11 well as the not inconsequential impacts to the
12 customers of the Federal Power System who pay for
13 these actions through utility rates.

14 We appreciate the importance of the
15 guardrails that the Power Act places on the program
16 to assure the Pacific Northwest and adequate,
17 efficient, economical, and reliable power supply.
18 Between 85 and 90 percent of Cowlitz PUD's power
19 supply is served by the federal system and we are
20 Bonneville's third largest customer of preference
21 power.

22 Affordability is top of mind at Cowlitz
23 PUD. We serve a customer base that struggles with a
24 disproportionately high rate of poverty, which is 28
25 percent higher than Washington's, 19 percent higher

1 than the US. And also a disproportionately low
2 household median income, 70 percent -- 77 percent of
3 Washington's, 93 percent of the national average.

4 Blue-collar manufacturing provides the
5 foundation of Cowlitz county's employment base and
6 is heavily dependent upon the affordable, reliable
7 power that comes from the federal system. The pulp
8 and paper industry here is heavily invested and
9 comprises over 60 percent of our retail electric
10 load.

11 New conditions that increase the cost of
12 federal system power or disrupt the reliability of
13 that service can have serious impacts to low income
14 households and vulnerable populations in our
15 community, as well as threaten the viability of the
16 primary purveyors of family wage jobs that support
17 the local economy.

18 We are continuing to evaluate the proposed
19 actions within the Draft Program and their potential
20 impacts, but we have concerns that elements of the
21 hydro system flow and passage operation strategy
22 that you've heard a lot about today will lead to
23 potential significantly higher system costs that
24 will be primarily born by BPA customers thus utility
25 rate payers.

1 Their proposed operations would further
2 reduce the amount of water available for generation
3 and erode the system's flexibility to respond to the
4 region's power resource needs during extreme heat
5 weather events. Rate payers will be measurably
6 impacted by greater exposure to wholesale market
7 prices during extreme events.

8 The increased outage risk would serve to
9 reduce the competitive position of our major
10 industrial customers who require a reliable,
11 adequate power supply to sustain their manufacturing
12 operations.

13 Finally, independent from the potential
14 rate impacts of the proposed actions, Cowlitz PUD
15 residential and business customers have absorbed
16 over 9 percent rate increases in the past two years
17 alone due to increases in federal system power
18 costs, lingering supply chain effects and general
19 inflation. Our industrial --

20 MARGARET HOFFMAN: One minute.

21 STEVE TAYLOR: One minute?

22 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Yeah. Thank you.

23 STEVE TAYLOR: Great. Our industrial
24 customers feel the direct impact of BPA rate
25 increases on their input costs, generally on a pass

1 through basis, reducing their product margins and
2 influencing future capital investment decisions for
3 their Cowlitz facilities.

4 So there's things that we do like about
5 the -- the program and -- and what the work you put
6 together, especially the focus on more effective
7 management of predators. But we also want to
8 implore you to keep the federal system compatible
9 with the clean energy transition and its provision
10 of -- of carbon-free power.

11 Again, we appreciate the opportunity to
12 relay our concerns over the real impacts to
13 customers of increased federal system costs and
14 resource capacity degradation. We look forward to
15 continuing the dialogue in the coming weeks and ask
16 for your consideration of BPA customer concerns when
17 making final program recommendations. Thank you
18 very much.

19 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Steve. And
20 next up we have Craig Lacy.

21 CRAIG LACY: Can you hear me okay?

22 MARGARET HOFFMAN: We can. Thank you.

23 CRAIG LACY: Okay. My name is Craig Lacy,
24 C-R-A-I-G L-A-C-Y. And thank you for letting me
25 speak today. I'm speaking on behalf of the

1 Indivisible Bend, which is a group of about 1,000
2 people, many of which recreate on the Snake River.

3 And we wish to support the efforts to not
4 just stop the extinction of the salmon up there, but
5 to recover wild fish, especially in the Snake River
6 Basin. According to NOAA Fisheries and the American
7 Fisheries Society, the key to recovering the salmon
8 in the Snake Rivers to breach the four lower dams.

9 The current plan is not doing a good job
10 of avoiding extinction of those fish, even though
11 billions have been spent other actions that would
12 help habitat restoration or -- or habitat
13 restoration and restoring salmon to blocked areas.
14 Jim Lichatowich and Rick Williams wrote a book
15 called Managed Extinction.

16 If you haven't read it yet, I highly
17 recommend you do so. It explains the impacts of
18 hatchery fish on wild populations. As the wild
19 salmon populations gets smaller, it's even more
20 important to consider the impacts that the hatchery
21 fish have on them.

22 Breaching the dams would reduce the
23 mitigation requirements such as hatchery
24 supplementation. A lot of things I was going to
25 talk about, Marjorie Millner and Alison Longley

1 discussed in their presentation. So I'll try to go
2 through this fairly quick.

3 The Lower Snake River Dams are among the
4 most expensive dams to operate in the Columbia
5 Basin. They're already operated at a loss. They
6 need -- and they need to have their turbines
7 replaced or rewound, which is very expensive, making
8 them even bigger losers.

9 The dams are -- the river dams in recent
10 studies indicate the snow packs getting lower and
11 the region as being replaced by rainfall. More
12 water's coming down the river in the springtime.
13 Much of the power generated by these dams is sold
14 cheaply as surplus power rather than when more power
15 is needed in the summertime and the winter.

16 What I'm saying is they're becoming less
17 necessary power producers. The science says it's
18 time to make these dams non-operational. Recover
19 salmon will help the orcas and many other species.
20 It will improve our forest and reduce the toxic
21 algae, blooms, and stream temperatures.

22 One other point I'd like to make for
23 Carra's behalf, these reservoirs emit a lot of
24 methane and if the salmon are allowed to return to
25 the headwaters, they'll improve our forest and --

1 and improve carbon sequestration as far as the
2 climate -- helping out our climate.

3 MARGARET HOFFMAN: One minute.

4 CRAIG LACY: Okay. I'm -- I'm finished.
5 Thank you very much for your time. Appreciate it.

6 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you so much,
7 Craig. And next up we have Jeffery Hammarlund.

8 JEFFERY HAMMARLUND: Very good. Can you
9 hear me folks?

10 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Yes.

11 JEFFERY HAMMARLUND: Okay. My name is
12 Jeff Hammarlund, J-E-F-F H-A-M-M-A-R-L-U-N-D. I'm a
13 retired professor at the Mark Hatfield School of
14 Government at Portland State University. One of the
15 graduate courses I taught for 30 years is called
16 Northwest Energy Policy and the Columbia River.

17 For a number of years after his
18 retirement, Senator Mark Hatfield co-taught this
19 course with -- this course with me before his help
20 began to decline a bit. Well over 1,000 alumni of
21 this course hold important jobs in this exciting
22 field. And two of the notable examples are the
23 Council's current executive director and the last
24 two BPA administrators. Well, I don't understand
25 the concept of retirement.

1 So two of my volunteer roles now are as an
2 active member of the Ecumenical Ministries of
3 Oregon's Creation Justice Committee and as co-chair
4 of the Climate Energy and Environment team of the
5 Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network or COIN, a
6 collection of over 100 -- 100 grassroots indivisible
7 groups located throughout the state, including the
8 one that -- that Craig just mentioned before me.

9 Very early in my career I had the honor of
10 serving on the professional staff of the US Senate
11 Energy Natural Resources Committee. And my primary
12 assignment in the mid -- in late 1970s was to help
13 the four Northwest members of that committee.

14 The chairman Henry Jackson from Washington
15 State, the ranking member Mark Hatfield, of course,
16 from Oregon, and Idaho's two senators at that time,
17 Frank Church and Jim McClure sort through the
18 components of what became the Northwest Power Act of
19 1980.

20 So as you can imagine, I've been following
21 the actions of the Power Council with great interest
22 ever since celebrating its successes and mourning on
23 those rare occasions when it seemed to be faltered a
24 bit. I spent the last night reading the staff Draft
25 Fish and Wildlife Program in detail. In general, I

1 was very impressed.

2 It is clearly, in my opinion, the best of
3 the Council's fish and wildlife programs over the
4 years. For a period of five years during the 1980s,
5 I was also the senior policy analyst at the Public
6 Power Council. So I will not be surprised if the
7 utility community and other commercial river users
8 want to weaken the -- the draft.

9 This is their role. This is their right.
10 But I hope you'll resist any such efforts. With the
11 Trump administration's decision to abandon the
12 climate basin agreements and its desire to weaken
13 the Endangered Species Act, frankly the Council's
14 program becomes even more viable.

15 I encourage the Council, like others have
16 done this afternoon, to adopt all and not just some
17 of the hydropower operations measures recommended by
18 the federal, state, and tribal fisheries manager --
19 managers. This is the direction you were given by
20 the Northwest Power and Conservation Act.

21 These measures include elevated levels of
22 spill through August 31st and even consideration of
23 the Lower Snow Snake River Dam removal. With these
24 additions, I believe the Council can be proud of its
25 efforts to achieve the parody promise that the

1 central -- central feature of the act that created
2 the Council. Thank you.

3 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Thank you, Jeff.

4 JEFFERY HAMMARLUND: My -- my minutes.

5 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Great work. Okay. We
6 are going to hold the public meeting open until 6:00
7 o'clock p.m. in case anybody joins us online or in
8 the room who would like to testify. But for now, I
9 will hold us in recess until such time that we have
10 somebody who would like to speak. So thank you.

11 (WHEREUPON, a recess was taken.)

12 THE REPORTER: I'm ready for you. Thank
13 you.

14 MARGARET HOFFMAN: Are they ready? I just
15 want to thank everybody for joining us for our very
16 first public hearing today. Thank you for your
17 public comments and we look forward to seeing you at
18 a future public hearing and getting your comments
19 online. And with that, I will close the public
20 hearing.

21 (WHEREUPON, the DRAFT 2026 COLUMBIA RIVER
22 BASIN FISH AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM TRANSCRIPT OF
23 MEETING concluded at 5:58 p.m.)

24
25

CERTIFICATE

I, Lindsay Vineyard, 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 26th day of January, 2026..



Lindsay Vineyard, CER No. 4287

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