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August 29, 2025

The Honorable Harriet Hageman
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Transmitted via email (Kirby.struhar@mail.house.gov)

RE: "Defending our Dams Act" ([H.R. 2073](#)).

Dear Chairwoman Hageman and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of Public Utility District No. 1 of Franklin County (Franklin PUD), WA, we write to express strong support for H.R. 2073, the Defending our Dams Act, introduced by Congressman Dan Newhouse. This legislation represents a powerful commitment from the federal government to protect our Lower Snake River Dams (LSRDs) from threat of breach.

My name is Victor Fuentes. I am the General Manager/CEO of Franklin PUD, a public utility providing electric and wholesale broadband services to nearly 30,000 customers in the cities of Pasco, Connell, and Kahlottus and other areas within Franklin County. Our community heavily depends on the hydropower system for affordable, reliable, and clean energy.

Franklin PUD serves a rapidly growing and unique community that has more than doubled in size since 2000. This is a diverse and working population, where over 55% of residents are Latino, 40% of households speak Spanish, and agriculture is the second-largest industry. Despite its growth, the community is also vulnerable, consistently ranking poorly on state indexes for equity, health, and the environment. With a poverty rate higher than the national average, the affordability and stability of hydropower are not just conveniences; they are considered essential for the basic stability, economic well-being, and public health of its residents.

The Lower Snake River Dams (LSRDs) are as vital to the Pacific Northwest's economy, especially Franklin County. As part of the Columbia-Snake River System, they form a marine highway that enables the transport of billions of dollars in cargo to global markets and support thousands of jobs. This system is the nation's top wheat export gateway and the third-largest grain export corridor in the world—feeding populations abroad while sustaining local communities.

Despite these benefits, and those of clean hydropower production and irrigating over 70,000 acres of high production farmland, the future of the LSRDs is under threat. The Biden Administration took steps toward breaching the dams, citing the need to restore wild salmon and steelhead populations in the Columbia River Basin to “healthy and abundant” levels. However, data shows that adult salmon returns have more than doubled since the first dam was built in 1938 because LSRD fish passage survival rates consistently exceed Endangered Species Act standards. NOAA supported Biden’s policy shift by publishing a flawed, unauthorized report, and the federal government subsequently signed a memorandum of agreement with the Six Sovereigns, paving the way for dam removal.

We appreciate President Trump’s June 12th action to withdraw from the memorandum and rescind the Notice of Intent for a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Columbia River System of Operations. The Defending Our Dams Act builds on this momentum and offers a path to lasting protection of the LSRDs.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Victor Fuentes", written in a cursive style.

Victor Fuentes
General Manager/ CEO
Franklin PUD

CC: Christopher.macarthur@mail.house.gov
Office of Rep. Dan Newhouse
Central Files

LTR 2025-105