

December 12, 2024

Melissa Yenke
Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia–Pacific Northwest Region
1150 N. Curtis Road
Boise, ID 83706

Sent via email to: bor-sha-p2ip_peaproject@usbr.gov

RE: Support of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Testing the Feasibility of Reintroducing Salmon in the Upper Columbia River Basin (P2IP)

Dear Ms. Yenke,

We represent national and Northwest conservation, clean energy, faith, fishing, and civic groups. On behalf of our millions of members and supporters united for the restoration of the Columbia River ecosystem and its fish and wildlife populations, we express support for the draft programmatic environmental assessment (PEA) for the *Phase 2 Implementation Plan (P2IP): Testing the Feasibility of Reintroducing Salmon in the Upper Columbia River Basin*. Relatedly, we express continued support for the September 2023 Memorandum of Understanding and Mediated Settlement Agreement (P2IP Agreement) to resolve pending litigation and pursue a proactive, collaborative, and science-based approach to implementing the P2IP through 2043.

The PEA represents necessary and continued progress towards the important goal of restoring ecologically and culturally important fisheries that the Bureau of Reclamation interrupted by constructing Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. Accordingly, we strongly support the PEA's Proposed Action of providing federal funding and authorizations to support twenty years of *in situ* studies that will include the reintroduction of salmon into blocked areas in the Upper Columbia. We are excited to witness and support this progress towards the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Spokane Tribe of Indians' following long-term goals:

- Restore Tribal traditional and cultural practices related to salmon in the region;
- Restore access to salmon for Tribal and non-Tribal communities in the blocked area;
- Return salmon to their historic habitats in the Upper Columbia River to increase the abundance and distribution of salmon in the Columbia River Basin, and;
- Restore ecosystem function in blocked area habitats as it relates to the cycling of marine-derived nutrients that anadromous salmon provide.

We commend the federal agencies for supporting the next twenty years of work to advance this important initiative. We urge the federal co-lead agencies to continue to act in accordance with their trust, fiduciary, and contractual obligations to the Tribes to fulfill the goals of the

P2IP. We are encouraged to see that the relevant legal processes, including this NEPA review, are moving forward so that P2IP activities can begin without delay. Additionally, we support expanding the federal-tribal partnership to include studies to assess the feasibility of reintroducing steelhead and Pacific Lamprey into the proposed study area.

The Tribes' longstanding efforts to return salmon to the Upper Columbia Basin benefit the entire ecosystem and human population of the Pacific Northwest, and we encourage the federal agencies responsible for the interruption of these fisheries to support and accelerate this critically important work.

Sincerely,



Miles Johnson
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On behalf of:

Columbia Riverkeeper
Save Our wild Salmon Coalition
Idaho Conservation League
Idaho Rivers United
Center for Environmental Law and Policy
Natural Resources Defense Council
Sierra Club
Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light