Resolution 22-12
Sponsors: Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Association; Northwest Public Power Association; Northwest Requirements Utilities; Washington Public Utility Districts Association; Oregon People's Utility District Association; Idaho Consumer-Owned Utilities Association; Benton Public Utility District; Cowlitz Public Utility District; Franklin Public Utility District; City of Richland; Chelan Public Utility District; Grant Public Utility District; Douglas County Public Utility District

In Support of Hydropower, the Federal Columbia River Power System, and Opposing Breach of the Lower Snake River Dams

Hydropower is a premier renewable resource that provides cost-effective, clean electricity. It plays a critical role as our nation works to lower greenhouse gas emissions and maintain an affordable, reliable, and resilient grid. As policies are adopted to increase the electrification of other sectors of the economy, such as transportation, it has become increasingly important. Hydro generation is unique in its ability to instantly increase or decrease generation and in maintaining the constant balance of generation and electric demand. It provides a foundation for reliability that is necessary with increasing levels of variable renewable resources, such as wind and solar.

The recently concluded Columbia River System Operation (CRSO) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) studied the environmental, biological, power supply, and socioeconomic impacts of the entire Federal Columbia River Power System, which is marketed by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). This multi-year, $50.4 million analysis of the system was conducted by federal government experts with consultations by federal natural resources agencies, state and tribal entities, and with input from the public. The EIS included analysis of the impacts of removing or breaching the Lower Snake River Dams (Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, and Ice Harbor). The unambiguous conclusion of this comprehensive federal study is that the Lower Snake River Dams play a critical role in the Northwest power system and economy, and that their continued operation does not jeopardize the existence of endangered or threatened salmon species.

The Lower Snake River Dams are among the lowest cost generating resources in the region and are a critical part of providing affordable, clean electricity to several of the region's most vulnerable communities. On an annual basis, the plants on the Lower Snake River provide about 1,000 average megawatts of electricity, enough to serve over half a million Northwest businesses, industries, and households.

The continued operation of the Lower Snake River Dams is central to reliably meeting the region's clean energy goals, providing dispatchable capacity to prevent blackouts and ramping capability to integrate other renewable resources. The Lower Snake River Dams can provide over 2,000 megawatts of sustained

peaking capacity and represent a quarter of the Federal Columbia River Power System's reserves holding capability. As extreme weather events, like ice storms and heatwaves, have become more commonplace, the Lower Snake River Dams have also proved critical to ensuring public safety.

The Lower Snake River Dams are important to maintaining an affordable power supply for Northwest communities. Breaching the Lower Snake River dams and replacing them with other non-emitting resources—the most likely scenario given coal plant retirements and state clean energy policies—could raise BPA's power supply rates up to 50 percent. For most utilities relying on BPA, that translates to a 25 percent rate increase for their customers.

Public power utilities are committed to scientific, cost-effective mitigation for the impacts of the federal hydro system. Costs related to fish and wildlife mitigation, including the cost of lost power generation, comprise a quarter or more of BPA's power rates. The Lower Snake River Dams feature state-of-the art fish passage technology greatly improving in-river fish survival, achieving spring juvenile survival at 96 percent and summer migrating fish survival at 93 percent. Academic studies have shown that fish survival through the Federal hydro system is comparable to undammed rivers, such as the Fraser River in British Columbia. Removal of the Lower Snake River Dams is not a clear path to recovery of endangered species or overall abundance of salmon. More attention is needed to the threats of ocean conditions, avian predation, and over-fishing.

In addition to delivering affordable and reliable clean power, the Lower Snake River Dams contribute to the region's economy by providing irrigation, navigation, recreation, and employment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: Consistent with environmental protection, the American Public Power Association (APPA) opposes efforts to remove productive dams that provide, or have the potential to provide, clean and economic hydropower generation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That APPA opposes proposals to breach the Lower Snake River Dams, or the development of additional federal studies that presuppose removal of the Lower Snake River Dams, and encourages collaboration to help salmon in every part of their life cycle.

Adopted at the Legislative & Resolutions Committee Meeting
March 1, 2022
Sunsets in March 2030