

March 16, 2018

RE: Support for H.R. 3144 - To provide for operations of the Federal Columbia River Power System pursuant to a certain operation plan for a specified time

Dear Members of the Northwest Congressional Delegation:

The Public Power Council (PPC) is a not for profit association that represents about 100 consumer-owned electric utilities in the Pacific Northwest on issues regarding the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). As purchasers of power from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), PPC members and their customers pay for a large share of the region's fish and wildlife mitigation costs. I write today in support of H.R. 3144, a bill that would stabilize a portion of these costs while the administrative process proceeds in the region.

BPA is on the precipice of a serious financial struggle created by consistent increases in its power rates over the past decade combined with a simultaneous drop in the market price of other power options in the West. As utilities begin to choose lesser-cost options elsewhere, BPA will not have the requisite customer base to fund all its statutory obligations, including regional fish and wildlife efforts. Without serious action to stabilize rates, BPA will struggle in the near future to recover its costs, putting all of its programs at risk.

An important part of the challenge facing BPA is the volatility of the costs of meeting its fish and wildlife-related obligations. H.R. 3144 would offer important assistance in this respect by temporarily keeping in place a federal hydro operations plan (approved by multiple Administrations) through the 2021 completion of an ongoing review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Upon completion of the NEPA process, it is expected that the legislation would effectively expire and the NEPA-supported plan for the federal hydro system would commence.

H.R. 3144 allows the court-ordered NEPA process to continue while avoiding a costly and potentially harmful spill experiment. In addition to its estimated \$40 million annual cost to regional electricity customers, NOAA Fisheries' Science Center modeling does not show appreciable benefits to salmon and steelhead from this operation. Higher levels of spill can harm fish from increased gas saturation in the water. The fear is that, without this legislation, a spill regime will be put in place that increases regional power costs while providing no apparent benefit to the fish it purports to help.

Another threatening aspect to the proposed spill experiment is that it would further limit the operational flexibility of the hydropower system that is essential to reliably meet electricity

demand in the region and integrate other renewable power resources. Further, it is expected that much of the carbon-free generation eliminated by this experiment will be replaced by fossil fuels, greatly increasing regional carbon emissions, running counter to carbon-reduction goals.

Your support for this bill can help keep the region's hydropower affordable and can assist in stabilizing BPA during precarious times. Urgent action on H.R. 3144 will resonate for years in maintaining a renewable, flexible, and carbon-free energy resource that serves as the region's economic backbone. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Corwin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S".

Scott Corwin
Executive Director