



January 29, 2024

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6115

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6115

The Honorable Jeff Duncan
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6115

The Honorable Diana Degette
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6115

Dear Chair Rogers and Subcommittee Chair Duncan,

Thank you for holding this hearing to examine the management and operations of the federal dams on the Columbia River and its tributaries, which include the Lower Snake River. As you may know, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) is a federation of 20 state wheat grower associations and industry partners that works to represent the needs and interests of wheat producers before Congress and federal agencies. Based in Washington, D.C., NAWG is grower-governed and works in areas as diverse as federal farm policy, transportation, trade, environmental regulation, agricultural research, and sustainability. NAWG appreciates the opportunity to provide a letter for the record expressing our support for the Columbia River system and Lower Snake River dams, which afford wheat growers the ability to get their products to market in a safe and affordable way.

The Lower Snake River Dams are a vital piece of infrastructure in the Pacific Northwest that plays an essential role in the livelihood of wheat growers not only within the region, but nationally. These dams are a critical infrastructure system required to move U.S. grown wheat to high value markets around the world. Breaching the dams would have serious economic consequences for producers and grain handlers while contradicting carbon reduction goals.

More than 55 percent of all U.S. wheat exports move through the Columbia River and its tributaries. Specifically, 10 percent of all U.S. wheat exports pass through the four locks and dams along the Snake River system. This vital corridor is the third largest grain export corridor in the world, and it is the single largest corridor for U.S. wheat exports. The river system plays an essential part of the logistical web that moves over half of all U.S. wheat exports to more than 20 Pacific Rim countries and encompasses some of the largest U.S. wheat buyers in the world. Our industry has worked hard to foster relationships with customers and countries worldwide. These relationships are vital to help supply food for their customers, who have come to rely on U.S. farmers to provide a stable, affordable, and high-quality supply.

Disruption to our dam system would significantly hurt our ability to consistently provide a low-cost, high-value food product compared to our foreign competitors. The proposed changes in altering flow regimes and even removing certain dams and locks would detrimentally impact both the agriculture and energy industry. Such drastic actions would eliminate clean transportation as well as clean hydroelectricity. The alternative measures proposed would release

significantly higher carbon emissions as grain handlers are forced to rely on railroads and semi-trucks for transportation.

Wheat producers would bear significant financial costs if the system of locks and dams along the Snake River is removed by an act of Congress or halted due to various administrative procedures. The long-term economic impacts of breaching the dams would be devastating. The potential financial hit would be due to a loss of value for wheat currently exported out of the PNW, loss of wheat value for growers in other parts of the U.S., loss of jobs and economic activity, and loss of regional farmland values. In addition to the direct impact on wheat growers, further analysis is needed to evaluate the broad implications dam breaching would have on the agriculture sector and the economy, such as existing physical assets—namely 197 inland grain elevators, 28 river terminals, and 8 terminal export facilities located along the river systems—which would lose significant value by breaching the dams.

For decades, the benefits of the Columbia Snake River System have contributed to thriving communities in the Pacific Northwest. We recognize the need for further dialogue to discuss collaborative approaches to aid in West Coast salmon recovery, and we strongly support science-based efforts to reassess mitigation strategies and deploy the newest technological advancements to recover endangered salmon populations in the Columbia-Snake River System while ensuring U.S. farmers maintain access to this vital navigation system. NAWG supports those efforts and many more throughout the basin. Still, we cannot support the removal of the Snake River dams and this critical trade gateway for the region and nations' agricultural products.

NAWG supports maintaining barge access and navigability throughout the Columbia Snake River System and will continue emphasizing its importance in serving wheat buyers worldwide. Breaching of the dams on the Lower Snake River System would have a devastating economic impact on wheat production and market competitiveness, not just in the Pacific Northwest Region but nationally.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chandler Soule". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.