

November 29, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing farmers and businesses across the agricultural value chain, we write to express our strong support for preserving the integrity of the Columbia-Snake River System, which provides tremendous value in the current operation of the river, including locks and dams, clean power generation, barging navigation, water storage, and irrigation – all of which are crucial to long-term viability of the agriculture sector in the Pacific Northwest. While we support collaborative efforts to address salmon recovery in the region, we write today to voice our serious concerns with recent calls on the Biden Administration and U.S. Congress to consider avenues for breaching the lower Snake River dams, which would devastate farmers in the region, decrease the competitiveness of home-grown agricultural products, and irreversibly eliminate a critical river system for the U.S. agriculture industry.

America's farmers and ranchers are among the most productive in the world, and they depend on exports. Roughly 20 percent of U.S. farm income comes from agricultural exports, which help support rural communities across the country. Our nation's inland waterways system is vital to moving American goods from farms to ports for export, saving anywhere from \$7 to \$9 billion in annual shipping costs over other forms of transport. The Columbia-Snake River System is the third-largest grain export corridor in the world, transporting nearly 30 percent of U.S. grain and oilseed exports through a sophisticated navigation system, which includes seven grain export terminals, 26 up-country grain barge loading terminals, and eight dams that lift vessels a combined 735 feet to deliver high value farm products safely and efficiently to West Coast ports and consumers worldwide.

In addition to the transportation benefits, the Columbia-Snake River System is crucial to keeping carbon emissions as low as possible as commodities travel from farm to market. Barges move more product, using less fuel than trucks or rail cars. Without barge access, 39,000 rail cars or 152,000 semi-trucks would have been needed to replace the cargo volume shipped on the Snake River in 2019. Barging is 40 percent more fuel-efficient than rail and 270 percent more fuel-efficient than semi-trucks. In fact, moving commodity flows from barge to rail and truck would result in over 1.25 million additional tons of carbon and other harmful emissions per year.

We appreciate the efforts of your Administration and Congress to champion new investments in our nation's infrastructure, including \$17 billion for ports and inland waterways in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*. We also support continued efforts to address major disruptions in the supply chain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Biden-Harris Administration looks to implement these important priorities, we strongly caution against taking any federal action that would lead to further disruptions in the food and agriculture supply chain, such as the elimination of this important navigation system. Further rail and trucking congestion that would occur as a result of removing barge access would impact farmers as far as the upper Midwest, as well as the major cargo ports of Seattle

and Tacoma. The existence of barging as a transport mode helps to discipline rail and trucking rates, ensuring that the price of moving goods in the Pacific Northwest remains competitive.

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.

As the Biden-Harris Administration considers important issues facing the communities, economy and resources of the Pacific Northwest, including the operations of the Columbia-Snake River System, we urge you to take into account the incredibly important role the river system plays for farmers and the broader agricultural community. We look forward to engaging in the dialogue in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Agriculture Transportation Coalition
Agricultural Retailers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
Farm Credit Council
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
North American Millers' Association
Pet Food Institute
U.S. Wheat Associates

Regional/State Organizations

Association of Washington Business
California Association of Wheat Growers
Colorado Association of Wheat Growers
Colorado Wheat Administrative Committee
Columbia Basin Development League
Columbia River Customs Brokers & Forwarders Association
Columbia River Pilots
Far West Agribusiness Association
Idaho Consumer Owned Utilities Association
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Idaho Grain Producers Association
Idaho Water Users Association
Idaho Wheat Commission
Illinois Corn Growers Association
Kansas Association of Wheat Growers
Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers
Minnesota Wheat Research and Promotional Council

Montana Agricultural Business Association
Montana Farm Bureau Federation
Montana Grain Growers Association
Nebraska Corn Growers Association
Nebraska Dry Pea & Lentil Commission
Nebraska Wheat Board
Nebraska Wheat Growers Association
North Carolina Small Grain Growers Association
North Dakota Wheat Commission
Northwest Agricultural Cooperative Council
Northwest RiverPartners
Oregonians for Food and Shelter
Oregon Seed Association
Oregon Wheat Growers League
Pacific Coast Council
Pacific Northwest Grain & Feed Association
Pacific Northwest Waterways Association
Snake River Multiuse Advocates
Texas Wheat Producers Association
Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Washington Cattlemen's Association
Washington Farm Bureau
Washington Friends of Farms & Forests
Washington Grain Commission
Washington Mint Growers Association
Washington Policy Center
Washington Potato & Onion Association
Washington State Dairy Federation
Washington State Potato Commission
Washington State Tree Fruit Association
Washington State Water Resources Association
Wyoming Wheat Marketing Commission

Companies

Ag Association Management
Ag Spray Equipment
AgriNorthwest
Almota Elevator Company
American Plant Food, Inc.
BioWest Ag Solutions
Brent Hartley Farms
CHS Inc.
CHS Primeland
Columbia Grain International
Columbia River Steamship Operators' Association, Inc.
Duane Munn and Sons Farms
Food Northwest
Grain Handling Inc.

Great Northwest Transport
Grigg Farms LLC
Helena Agri-Enterprises
Highline Grain Growers, Inc.
Hyak Maritime LLC
Inland Power & Light
International Raw Materials LTD
Laughlin Cartrell Inc.
Lewis-Clark Terminal, Inc.
McGregor Land and Livestock
McGregor Risk Management
Mid Columbia Producers, Inc.
M&L Carstensen Farms
Northwest Grain Growers, Inc.
Pacifacor LLC
Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative
Pacific Northwest Generating Cooperative (PNGC)
Pleasant Valley Cider Apples
Pomeroy Grain Growers, Inc.
Potato Growers of Washington, Inc.
R Munn Farms, LLC
Shaver Transportation Company
Sun Heaven Farms LLC
Sunset Produce
Temco, LLC
The McGregor Company
Tidewater Transportation and Terminals
Tiger-Sul Products
TLR - Total Logistics Resource, Inc.
Two Rivers Terminal, LLC
Uniontown Cooperative Association
United Grain Corporation
U.S. Borax, Inc.
Valley Agronomics
Verdesian Life Science
Volm Companies, Inc.
WestLink Ag Cooperative Corporation
Wilbur-Ellis Company

Port Authorities

Port of Benton
Port of Clarkston
Port of Kalama
Port of Longview
Port of Pasco
Port of Skamania County
Port of Walla Walla
Port of Whitman County

CC:

Brenda Mallory, Chair
Council on Environmental Quality

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Secretary Deb Haaland
U.S. Department of the Interior

Secretary Jennifer Granholm
U.S. Department of Energy

Secretary Gina Raimondo
U.S. Department of Commerce

Secretary Lloyd Austin
U.S. Department of Defense