

August 28, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman  
Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1332 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Harriet Hageman  
Chair  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Subcommittee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Val Hoyle  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Subcommittee  
1332 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman:

**RE: Opposition to H.R. 2073**

Dear Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, Chair Hageman, and Ranking Member Hoyle:

The undersigned 65 businesses and organizations write on behalf of our millions of members and supporters in strong opposition to H.R. 2073, the “Defending our Dams Act.” This legislation would not address real challenges facing the Northwest, including struggling wild salmon and orca populations, rising energy rates, and outdated infrastructure. Instead, it would codify a head-in-the-sand approach to these interconnected challenges and double down on President Trump’s unilateral withdrawal from the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement that sought to comprehensively address them. We urge the subcommittee to strongly oppose this legislation.

The wild salmon and steelhead of the Columbia River Basin are both a national treasure and an icon of the Northwest. These fish are critically important to Tribal nations throughout the Basin, including the four Lower Columbia River Treaty Tribes who reserved their right to fish in their treaties with the U.S. in 1855; to the recreational and commercial fishing industries, whose livelihoods depend on continued salmon runs; to the Southern Resident orcas and other species that feed on or are connected to salmon; and to all of us who cherish these emblematic species. But just a small fraction of the Columbia’s once plentiful wild salmon now return to spawn each year, in large part due to habitat loss, heightened river temperatures, increased predation, and other direct consequences of the hydrosystem. Thirteen Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead stocks are currently listed under the Endangered Species Act, many populations are already extirpated or nearing extinction, and none are near their historical abundance. At the same time, challenges such as extreme weather events and load growth are putting increasing pressure on the electrical grid and demonstrating the need for quickly and responsibly deploying new renewable energy resources. Solving interconnected challenges such as these requires a willingness to ask hard questions and work collaboratively, rather than simply continuing a failed status quo.

Unfortunately, H.R. 2073 would significantly undermine efforts to address these issues. If passed into law, this legislation would permanently prohibit the use of any federal funds to study replacing any of the services provided by the lower Snake River dams, regardless of the benefits of those replacement projects, and could hamstring any number of projects that one might argue may “lead to” altering the dams. It would also prevent the federal government from even studying breach of the lower Snake River dams, despite federal and independent scientists repeatedly determining that is a required centerpiece

action to restore salmon runs. In other words, H.R. 2073 would force federal agencies to ignore reality and forever eschew exactly the kind of research and planning that the region needs if it is to recover salmon, deploy clean energy, and modernize infrastructure.

Additionally, the legislation could have unintended consequences by potentially preventing necessary modifications to the Lower Snake River dams by prohibiting any “functional alteration of” the dams. This undefined term could give rise to arguments that even replacing (or considering whether to replace) a spillway gate, temporarily shutting down the navigational locks to make repairs, or altering operations to account for shifting river conditions under climate change would be prohibited by this bill. It also confuses the fundamentally distinct roles played by the agency that manages the dams (the Army Corps of Engineers) and the agency that markets the power they generate (the Bonneville Power Administration) by requiring the explicit approval of both agencies before any changes are made to dam operations, possibly upsetting the delicate balance that was adopted as part of the Northwest Power Act.

Rather than pursuing H.R. 2073, Congress should focus on addressing real needs created by the administration’s mass firings of staff at agencies that support salmon recovery and freezing of funds supporting critical infrastructure projects. Congress should also help advance the only comprehensive plan to address salmon, energy, and infrastructure challenges: the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative developed by the Six Sovereigns. With the administration’s recent withdrawal from the agreement implementing that plan, it is more important than ever that Congress advance win-win solutions that address the needs of Tribes, states, and stakeholders, rather than harmful legislation such as H.R. 2073.

Sincerely,

American Rivers  
American Whitewater  
Association of Northwest Steelheaders  
Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project  
bluefish.org  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Central/Eastern Oregon Chapter of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness  
Columbia Riverkeeper  
Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN)  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Duna Fisheries, LLC  
EcoFlight  
Endangered Species Coalition  
F/V Arminta  
Fly Fishers International  
Friends of the Clearwater  
Friends of the San Juans  
Hispanic Access Foundation  
Idaho Conservation League  
Idaho Rivers United  
Indivisible Bellingham  
Indivisible Sequim  
Indivisible Vashon  
Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center  
JUJustice Wasiington  
Kettle Range Conservation Group  
League of Conservation Voters

Mckenzie River Guides Association  
Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment  
Northeast Oregon Ecosystems  
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association  
Northwest Watershed Institute  
NW Energy Coalition  
Oceana  
Olympia Indivisible  
Oregon League of Conservation Voters  
Oregon Shores  
Oregon Wild  
Pacific Rivers  
Puget Soundkeeper Alliance  
Rivers Without Borders  
Save Our wild Salmon Coalition  
Sierra Club  
Snake River Savers  
Snake River Waterkeeper  
Snohomish County Indivisible  
Sound Action  
Spokane Riverkeeper  
Students for Climate Action Bellingham  
The OP Resists  
The Sawtooth Society  
Twin Harbors Waterkeeper  
Vashon Climate Action Group  
Washington Conservation Action  
Washington Wild  
WaterWatch of Oregon  
Western Watersheds Project  
Western Wildlife Conservancy  
Whale and Dolphin Conservation, North America  
Wild Steelhead Coalition  
WildEarth Guardians  
Wildlife for All  
Willamette Riverkeeper  
Youth Salmon Protectors  
350Wenatchee.org