



The Cooperative Way!

BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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Resolution: #13-07-17

RESOLUTION OF THE BENTON REA BOARD OF TRUSTEES SUPPORTING H.R. 3144 FEDERAL LEGISLATION ADDRESSING THE FEDERAL COLUMBIA RIVER POWER SYSTEM BIOLOGICAL OPINION

WHEREAS, Members of Benton Rural Electric Association receive 86 percent of their electricity from the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS); and

WHEREAS, Hydropower provides 70 percent of Washington state's clean affordable and reliable electricity and 60 percent of the Pacific Northwest's electricity with the majority of the power produced by the FCRPS; and

WHEREAS, Hydroelectric dams also provide many benefits to the region, including flood control, navigation, irrigation, and recreation: and

WHEREAS, Federal legislation requires the federal agencies responsible for the management of the FCRPS to operate the hydro system in compliance with the Biological Opinion (BiOp) approved by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries in 2008/2010 and supplemented in 2014, and

WHEREAS, This BiOp was vetted and supported by the previous presidential administrations' top scientists and has resulted in wild salmon numbers trending significantly upward due to changes in operations and the installation of new passage technologies, and

WHEREAS, The FCRPS BiOp has successfully improved fish runs including 97% of young salmon successfully making it past the dams proving that both dams and fish can coexist; and

WHEREAS, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has spent \$15.28 billion in total spending on infrastructure and fish mitigation projects since 1978; and

WHEREAS, Despite the success of the current FCRPS BiOp, in March 2017, the United States District Court for the District of Oregon directed the federal agencies to undertake a comprehensive review of hydro operations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and strongly urged the federal agencies to include analysis of the removal, bypass or breaching one or more of the four lower Snake River dams; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 3144, "To provide for operations of the Federal Columbia River Power System pursuant to a certain operation plan for a specified period of time", was introduced in the United States House of Representatives, and

WHEREAS, The federal legislation would continue federal hydro operations through September 30, 2022 or until the court-ordered, comprehensive environmental NEPA process concludes, a new BiOp is in place, and judicial review is complete, and

WHEREAS, The federal legislation would prohibit studies, plans or structural modifications at the dams which would impair hydroelectric power generation or navigation on the Columbia River; and

WHEREAS, The federal legislation offers a creative solution that is good for both listed salmon and the economy of the communities served by Benton Rural Electric Association, and provides relief in the endless litigation of federal hydro system operations by directing the federal agencies to implement the current federal salmon plan, known as the 2014 Supplemental BiOp; and

WHEREAS, The federal legislation provides time for the federal agencies to complete the court-ordered NEPA environmental review process analyzing federal hydro system operations and focuses the general agencies limited resources on getting that process right.

WHEREAS, without the legislation, the agencies would be compelled to author a new 2018 BiOp without the benefit of the new science and public input provided by the comprehensive NEPA review, and avoids experiments or spill tests at the eight Columbia and Snake dams, and studies and modifications at the dams which would restrict electrical generation, which would create uncertainties in BPA's power costs and supply and raise Northwest electric customers' rates.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of Benton Rural Electric Association supports the passage of H.R. 3144 this July 26, 2017.



PRESIDENT

ATTEST:



SECRETARY