

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 4, 2022

The Honorable Richard Spinrad, Ph.D.
Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Administrator Spinrad,

As members of the Northwest delegation, we write to express our deep concern about recent actions taken by this administration which have demonstrated a seeming disregard for scientific integrity. Specifically, we were appalled by the lack of transparency and obvious political intervention in processes regarding the recent release of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) draft “report” relating to the Columbia River Basin. Even more alarming, we have received further indication of political maneuvering by this administration to prevent information on the costs of replacing the power generated by the lower Snake River dams on the Federal Columbia River Power System from being made public prior to the release of the previously mentioned NOAA draft “report.”

While the Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) took four years to complete, included multiple comment periods, and cost over \$50 million and countless staff hours, the recent NOAA draft “report” appears to have been released without process, prior Congressional notification, or any triggering action. Even more troubling, the NOAA draft “report” cites plaintiffs in *National Wildlife Federation et al. v. National Marine Fisheries Service et al. [01-640]* as sources without referencing non-plaintiff co-managers. Given the extreme and potentially damaging nature of these actions, we request your response to the following questions related to the draft “report” titled *Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead* and the *BPA Lower Snake River Dams Power Replacement Study* no later than August 15, 2022:

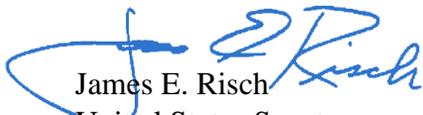
1. When did the development of the *Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead* draft “report” released by NOAA (draft “report”) begin?
2. Who directed NOAA to initiate the drafting of the draft “report”?
3. The subtitle is “Regional Fishery Co-manager Review Draft.” Which co-managers were consulted in the development of v2.5 as of July 11, 2022?
4. Which co-managers were not consulted in the development of v2.5 as of July 11, 2022?
5. Who directed NOAA to include input from scientists and fishery managers from the Nez Perce Tribe and State of Oregon in the draft “report”?
6. Who directed that input from other co-managers not be included?
7. There are no formal authors listed on the draft “report.” Who drafted the draft “report”?
8. Were there any changes to any of the versions of the draft “report” made at the request of anyone external to NOAA? If so, who?

9. This draft “report” was not published through a Federal Register Notice or any other public process. Has NOAA initiated a formal comment period? If so, how can interested stakeholders submit their comments for consideration?
10. Why was Congress not informed of versions of this draft “report” prior to v2.5? Please provide all earlier drafts of the draft “report.”
11. Was NOAA directed to release this draft “report” on a particular day or after a particular day? If so, by whom? Was a rationale provided? If so, please provide this rationale.
12. Did NOAA release the draft “report” at the request of CEQ or anyone external to NOAA?

The infrastructure on the Columbia River System provides invaluable benefits to the Pacific Northwest, including carbon-free energy, flood control mitigation, irrigation, navigation, and recreation benefits. Balancing these vital interests with species conservation is not an easy task. It is made significantly more difficult when science and collaboration is replaced by politically-motivated intervention.

The recent actions by this administration have sewn complete distrust in this administration’s ability to lead with facts, science, and transparency regarding the Columbia River System. These actions will undoubtedly have long-term and damaging effects on this administration’s ability to bring diverse stakeholders together to chart a path forward on species recovery and preservation of the vital benefits of the Columbia River System.

Sincerely,



James E. Risch
United States Senator



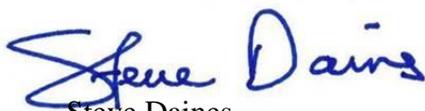
Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress