Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2023

The Honorable Brenda Mallory
Chair
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Chair Mallory:

As members of the Pacific Northwest delegation, we write to urge that you utilize the remainder of the 60-day stay to productively engage with all the parties to the litigation in the mediation process.

Over the past two years, we have continually heard from stakeholders that they are left in the dark as negotiations take place. While the mediation process is confidential, many of the intervenor defendants have expressed deep reservations and considerable disappointment regarding the overall process that has been followed. Of particular concern is the Biden administration's apparent push to forgo trying to reach a "consensus" resolution and instead advance a predetermined outcome of dam removal.

Over the summer, the Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries held a field hearing in Richland, Washington, titled "The Northwest at Risk: The Environmentalist's Effort to Destroy Navigation, Transportation, and Access to Reliable Power." There, the Subcommittee heard from multiple industries and stakeholders on the importance and benefits the four lower Snake River dams provide to river communities, electric power cooperatives, the economy, and the environment.

Unfortunately, it has become clear that this mediation process fails to allow meaningful input from the intervenor defendants. These organizations represent millions of electricity customers, farmers, river-dependent ports, transportation, and export sectors across the Northwest whose livelihoods and interests have not had a true seat at the table. This is deeply concerning, as it implies that a small group of stakeholders is attempting to dictate decisions for our entire region regarding our climate response, electricity rates, transportation, grid reliability, food and energy security, and the future of river dependent communities without the full opportunity of affected stakeholders to participate.

If our shared goal to establish "a durable long-term strategy" is truly the priority, then it is imperative that an inclusive mediation process needs to take place to best account for the impacts

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to the region's ratepayers, and the economy. It is unacceptable that the mediation negotiations are being conducted behind closed doors via private caucuses to craft concessions to plaintiffs without regard to the impacts to the region's ratepayers, the economy, or ensuring that the Congressionally authorized purposes of the Columbia River System are met.

We implore you to redirect your efforts towards engaging all stakeholders in the region rather than solely focusing on the plaintiffs. This will ensure a more productive, inclusive, and transparent mediation process.

Sincerely,

Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress

Matt Rosendale
Member of Congress