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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

October 17, 2019

Jill Smail
Chief Negotiator, Columbia River Treaty
U.S. Department of State
2201 C. St NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Ms. Smail:

I write to request that the next session of the U.S. Department of State's Town Hall series, "Modernizing the Columbia River Treaty," be held in Tri-Cities, Washington. The people of the Tri-Cities and the Columbia Basin must be provided the opportunity to offer input within their own community on this important matter.

As we all know, the Columbia River Treaty's (CRT) hydroelectric power operations and management of flood control, along with its crucial support of irrigation, navigation, municipal water, and ecosystem and wildlife habitat needs, provide substantial benefits to millions of people on both sides of the border. Perhaps no one is more aware of the influence the CRT has on our communities and economies than those living in the greater Columbia Basin region. Residents in Tri-Cities and throughout the area are no strangers to the critical role federal water and power infrastructure plays in our daily lives. As the costs of sending hydropower benefits to Canada are paid by the 6.4 million Northwest electric customers, represented by the utilities who receive power from BPA and the Mid-Columbia Public Utility Districts right here in our own backyard, it is crucial that their questions, concerns, and feedback regarding the ongoing negotiations are heard by the State Department.

Now that you have hosted town halls in one city of each of the affected states—Spokane, WA; Portland, OR; Kalispell, MT; and Boise, ID—I believe voices in Tri-Cities, WA must also be heard as negotiations move forward to update the CRT. This is a strong, motivated community who I know will lend substantive and important feedback as you continue your negotiations.

As you remain focused on the importance of modernizing the CRT to be compatible with the region's needs and priorities in the 21st Century, I strongly urge you to schedule a town hall in Tri-Cities. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance with preparations for this town hall.

Sincerely,

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress