



### PNWA supports a balanced approach to fish and dams

PNWA manages the Inland Ports and Navigation Group (IPNG), a subset of the broader membership. IPNG has been an intervener in the lawsuit over dam operations for twenty years, supporting the work of the federal agencies and submitting information to the Court regarding the views of the ports, terminals, navigation, growers, utilities and more.

Northwest navigation interests have always strongly supported robust salmon recovery efforts that preserve the multiple uses of the river system. PNWA believes, like most in the scientific community, that salmon runs have been affected by a variety of factors. A commitment to improving all four of the “H’s” of salmon recovery - hydro, habitat, harvest, and hatcheries - is necessary for listed species to recover. Extreme measures like dam breaching have been studied and rejected numerous times over the last twenty years.

Navigation and hydropower are clean, efficient and economical. Hydropower produces no greenhouse gasses, does not contribute to climate change, and is necessary for integrating wind and solar power into the regional energy portfolio. Barging along the Columbia Snake River System is the cleanest and most fuel efficient mode of transportation. Breaching dams would end barge navigation and significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions due to freight transportation and baseload energy replacement.

### Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) completed in 2020

As a result of previous litigation regarding Columbia River System Operations (CRSO), the federal agencies released 2020 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in autumn 2020. The [CRSO EIS](#) was approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration, and was supported by Biological Opinions from both NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. It documents the selection of a Preferred Alternative to accomplish the multiple purposes of 14 federal dams in the Columbia River Basin while complying with relevant environmental laws and regulations.

The EIS involved nearly four years of regional collaboration between federal agencies, numerous Tribes, and the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. The National Environmental Policy Act process that guided development of the EIS also included several opportunities for agencies, advocacy groups, and the public to review extensive draft documents. Nearly 59,000 comments were submitted, which were reviewed by federal officials and addressed in the final EIS. Community members also submitted public testimony during several formal comment periods.

The agencies addressed their decision to not breach the four lower Snake River dams, maintaining that the dams are critical infrastructure that Northwest communities depend on for low carbon hydropower and efficient river navigation. Breaching would require massive investments to replace the barging system with rail and trucking, more than double the region’s risk of power shortages, and have significant impacts to climate change.

### Current Status - A shift from litigation to mediation

Despite the thorough and expansive CRSO EIS, the federal government was again sued in October 2020 because their final record of decision (ROD) did not include breaching of the four Lower Snake River dams. In late 2021, the federal government and plaintiffs agreed to a stay in the litigation in order to focus on a negotiated path forward. This stay is currently scheduled to expire on August 31, 2023. The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service (FMCS) are leading negotiations between all parties which include a number of federal agencies, tribes, the States of Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Washington, environmental groups, and defendant intervenors including IPNG.

Despite numerous concerns with the FMCS process, including a significant focus on dam breaching, IPNG has continued to participate in the mediation in good faith. IPNG continues our focus on the areas that we can collaboratively work with regional partners to improve fish runs across the basin. These include increasing funding and support for habitat and ecosystem projects, culvert removal, toxics reduction, predator abatement, advanced fish passage solutions at the federal projects, and more. We also encourage the federal government to study the areas where there are known gaps in information, including the impact of ocean conditions on salmon, steelhead and other species. It is widely understood that ocean conditions and climate change are the primary drivers of salmonid mortality, not only in the Pacific Northwest but across the entire U.S. West Coast