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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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#### **Northwestern Communities Threatened by Agreement Between U.S. Government and Plaintiffs**

**Portland, Oregon** – Yesterday, the U.S. Government and plaintiffs in the litigation regarding Columbia Snake River Operation (CRSO) and Federal Power System operations filed a settlement agreement with the District Court of Oregon. The agreement includes a 5-year stay in litigation with an option to extend an additional 5 years. This secretly negotiated agreement threatens a broad swath of regional stakeholders beyond river users – from ratepayers, farmers, barging, cruise operations, ports, irrigators, and more, ***“The agreement announced by the Biden Administration presents serious concerns to the citizens of the Pacific Northwest,”*** said Neil Maunu, Executive Director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways (PNWA). ***“The Administration has sidestepped critical discussions on river transportation and irrigation, disregarding the livelihoods of local communities. We're facing a decision that could decimate communities, trade, and economies that rely on the Lower Snake River Dams without stakeholder engagement or public scrutiny.”***

The CRSO encompasses fourteen federal projects spread across four Northwest states. The settlement's myopic focus on the elimination of the Lower Snake River Dams poses risks to the broader salmon recovery initiatives by prioritizing unproven measures over established, science-backed solutions. The agreement runs counter to NOAA's extensive \$50 million 2020 CRSO EIS and Biological Opinion. It also ignores key actions needed for salmonid recovery and dismisses improved fish migration, habitat development, and environmental quality efforts. Moreover, it overlooks the historical gains in salmon populations since the 1930s – a testament to past and ongoing enhancement efforts within the basin. Improvements to fish passage, increased habitat access and restoration, culvert repair and replacement, predator abatement, toxics reduction, and studying the impacts of ocean conditions are essential for understanding and restoring all listed salmonids throughout the entire Pacific Northwest.

This proposed agreement also ignores the need to reduce carbon emissions from both the transportation and energy sectors to combat climate change. In fact, this agreement would exacerbate climate change and potentially lead to an increase in emissions of five million metric tons per year if efficient barging transportation is pushed to currently non-existent rail and trucking. This is the equivalent of building one large coal plant every two to three years.

In addition to the dire environmental effects from increased carbon due to the elimination of barging, significant disruption to irrigation systems could be catastrophic for approximately 8,000 farmers across Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Transportation expenses would skyrocket, and irrigation water would be less reliable, and likely totally lost for some farmers. These are unacceptable outcomes for the region's farmers and disregard their crucial contribution to our global food supply.

***“The exclusion of regional voices from the negotiations is a missed opportunity to address these multifaceted issues, signaling a top-down decision-making process removed from those it affects,”*** said Maunu. ***“This is extremely apparent by the lack of attention given to the transportation study aimed at examining the impacts of dam breaching with only a meager \$750,000 allocated for an impact study, which starkly contrast with the in-depth \$10 million analysis suggested in the Murray-Inslee Report. A fully informed approach, accounting for all repercussions to our transportation network, is indispensable – the current proposal grossly underestimates this need.”***

PNWA remains dedicated to collaborating with our members and our congressional leaders to expose the numerous deficiencies in this settlement process and agreement. We will continue to champion the interests of our varied membership, river users, and the millions of citizens in the Pacific Northwest impacted by this issue.

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*PNWA is a non-profit trade association that advocates for federal policies and funding in support of regional economic and environmental sustainability. PNWA represents over 150 public ports, navigation, transportation, trade, tourism, agriculture, forest products, energy and local government interests in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Learn more at [www.pnwa.net](http://www.pnwa.net).*