



Nor'wester Newsletter

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[PNWA
Website](#)

[About
PNWA](#)

[Action
Agenda](#)

[PNWA
Events](#)

[Contact
Us](#)

In This Issue

- 2024 Virtual Regional Meetings Schedule
- Secret agreement between US government and anti-hydro plaintiff groups represent "Greatest Threat" for the region
- PNWA Makes a Timely and Productive Visit to the Hill
- Columbia River Treaty (CRT) Stakeholders Meeting Postponed
- Chittenden/Ballard Locks Tour
- 2024 Mission to Washington Registration Open
- USDOT Announces 2024 RAISE Grant Program Funds

2024 Virtual Regional Meeting Schedule

In preparation for the Mission to Washington March 3-7, 2024, PNWA will hold a series of virtual regional meetings to hear about emerging issues, new projects, review navigation funding and issues (including WRDA and Regulatory), and provide an overview of the Mission to Washington. Links to the meetings will be sent to registered participants. So please save the following dates and register below:

Lower Columbia River Virtual Regional Meeting

February 21, 2024 from 10:00am - 12:00pm

Inland Columbia River System Virtual Regional Meeting

February 21, 2024 from 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Oregon Coast Virtual Regional Meeting

February 22, 2024 from 10:00am - 12:00pm

Puget Sound and Washington Coast Virtual Meeting

February 22, 2024 from 1:00pm - 3:00pm

[Click here to register for the meeting\(s\)](#)

If you have any questions, please contact [Dena Horton](#).

Secret agreement between US government and anti-hydro plaintiff groups represents "Greatest Threat" for the region

Proposed US Government Commitments undermines clean energy and climate goals, negatively impacts the region's economy and food production, raises electricity rates on struggling families, fails to address climate-friendly transportation and threatens grid reliability

The US Government's "Commitments in Support of the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative and in Partnership with the Six Sovereigns" ("USG Commitments") *was made public by members of the Northwest Congressional Delegation*. The Six Sovereigns include the State of Oregon, State of Washington, Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation.

Our joint press statement is in response to the *public release of the USG Commitments*. The USG Commitments spell out the terms of a proposed settlement over long-standing litigation surrounding the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) and the lower Snake River dams.

The USG Commitments are an outgrowth of a process that was supposed to support collaborative development of "a durable long-term strategy to restore salmon and other native fish populations to healthy and abundant levels, honoring Federal commitments to Tribal Nations, delivering affordable and reliable clean power, and meeting the many resilience needs of stakeholders across the region." This document fails to meaningfully address any of these requirements. Instead, it undermines the future of achieving clean energy mandates and potentially raises the rates of electricity customers across the region without addressing the true cause of salmon declines – the warming, acidifying ocean.

In a joint statement, the executive directors of Northwest RiverPartners, the Public Power Council, and the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association expressed extreme concern about the transparency of this process and the USG Commitments' impacts on millions of Northwesterners, "Our organizations have repeatedly looked for ways to find common ground with the plaintiffs' concerns during the mediation process, submitting numerous inputs, documents, and studies. Instead of working with all interests, the US Government chose for months to hold secret negotiations and refused to share any details with us, let alone allow our participation. It is not surprising, then, that this proposal turns its back on over three million electricity customers as well as the farming, transportation, navigation, and economic needs of the region. By purposely excluding our respective organizations from the negotiations, literally millions of Northwest residents were deprived of fair representation in this process."

Neil Maunu, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, said, "We are extremely disappointed in the flawed process that led to these USG Commitments, which would eliminate shipping and river transportation in Idaho and eastern Washington and remove over 48,000 acres from food production. These USG Commitments threaten the livelihoods of farmers, ports, and barging operators, and presents river system safety concerns in a way we've never seen before."

[*Read the press release here*](#)

PNWA Makes Timely and Productive Visit to the Hill



PNWA staff and representatives from American Cruise Lines and the ports of Bellingham, Portland, and Vancouver made the trek to Washington, DC November 28-30 to advocate for PNWA priorities in FY2024 appropriations and the upcoming Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. We also discussed Regulatory challenges, the Columbia River Treaty, and issues related to the Columbia River System Operations litigation/mediation. We met with Congressman Dan Newhouse, Assistant Secretary for the Army-Civil Works Michael Connor and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Jaime Pinkham, and staff for six House Members of Congress, staff for six Senators, staff for the House Natural Resources Committee, and the Deputy Chief for the Northwestern and Pacific Ocean Divisions at Corps Headquarters. It was a packed schedule but the discussions and insights were valuable. Many thanks to Kristin Meira, Mike Hogan, Elvia Montoya, Ryan Hart, and to Justin LeBlanc at LeBlanc Government Relations for your willingness to participate in this advocacy trip.

Columbia River Treaty (CRT) Stakeholders Meeting Postponed

Unfortunately, key Northwestern Division leadership has been called away for a temporary duty obligation and will not be able to meet with PNWA stakeholders as originally planned for December 13th. PNWA will work with the Northwestern Division to find an alternative date and time after the holidays to meet in-person to discuss the Columbia River Treaty and Post-September 2024 operations.

If you have not had a chance to watch the video of the Information Sessions held

earlier, this fall, please do so. The video regarding the Columbia River Treaty and real-time flood risk management can be found by scrolling down the page located [here](#).

PNWA previously [reported](#) about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Northwestern Division [announcement](#) and public information sessions held in September and early October about post-September 2024 Columbia River Treaty (CRT) operations. These were information sessions only and did not provide an opportunity to provide input to the Corps at the meetings. The stakeholder meeting will be an opportunity to provide input and ask questions specific to PNWA members.

Corps Northwestern Division Director of Programs Beth Coffey provided an [update](#) at PNWA's Annual Convention and included the current status and post-September 2024 operations in her presentation. As we understand it, the Snake River System operations will largely not be affected. However, without a modernized treaty and flood control agreement, then coordination for flood risk management will change and potentially lead to less predictability in water flows from Canada on the Columbia River System. It will be more challenging for the Corps to manage all the dams to meet their other authorized purposes such as water supply, navigation, fish and wildlife, and other purposes. This uncertainty is a serious concern for navigation interests. The U.S. will be able to call upon Canada to provide water storage, but it is unclear how this will take place, how much it would cost, and what impacts to river draft levels will occur.

During PNWA's recent trip to Washington, DC we learned the operational issues have largely been settled, but the amount of money to be paid by the US to Canada to hold back water when called upon and how much of the hydropower will be provided to Canada (entitlement) are still being negotiated. Unfortunately, operational details were not able to be disclosed.

Chittenden/Ballard Locks Tour



PNWA staff, representatives of the Port of Seattle, Northwest Seaport Alliance and Congressional Staff recently toured the Chittenden Locks. Led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Seattle District, we toured the dewatered lock to view the large lock center gate replacement project currently taking place thanks to Federal appropriations and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding.

The Corps completed the construction of the Chittenden Canal and Locks in 1917. The project intended to maintain Lake Washington and Lake Union water levels at 20 to 22 feet above sea level, prevent saltwater from the Puget Sound from infiltrating the freshwater lakes, and assist vessels navigating from the water lakes to the Puget Sound. The system includes one small and one large lock, a spillway with six gates, and a fish ladder for adult anadromous fish to return to their spawning grounds. This is the busiest lock in the nation, providing \$1.2 billion to the local economy, and enabling 50,000 vessels to pass through the locks.

Thank you to the Corps Seattle District staff for the informative tour and we appreciate our members and Congressional staff for their participation. If you have additional questions, please [contact Dena Horton](#)

The 2024 PNWA Mission to Washington promises to be an event you will want to attend! Join us in the nation's capital as we meet with lawmakers and their offices to ensure our priorities and issues are top of mind.

Throughout the program, participants will gain valuable insights and network with key federal agency officials, industry partners, and DC insiders. In addition, we will spend two days on Capitol Hill meeting with the Northwest Congressional delegation. Details of the agenda will be released in the coming weeks. Make your plans to join us today!

[Register for the 2024 Mission to Washington](#)

USDOT Announces \$1.5 Billion Available through the 2024 RAISE Grant Program Funds

The U.S. Department of Transportation has published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for \$1.5 billion in grant funding through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant program for 2024. The program helps communities around the country carry out projects with significant local or regional impact.

RAISE discretionary grants help project sponsors at the state and local levels, including municipalities, Tribal governments, counties, and others complete critical freight and passenger transportation infrastructure projects. The eligibility requirements of RAISE allow project sponsors to obtain funding for projects that may be harder to support through other U.S. DOT grant programs.

[Read more here](#)

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*About
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*Action
Agenda*

*PNWA
Events*

*Contact
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