

COLUMBIA BASIN RESTORATION INITIATIVE

NEZ PERCE • OREGON • UMATILLA • WARM SPRINGS • WASHINGTON • YAKAMA



A New Opportunity to Restore Salmon, Honor Treaties, and Invest in the Northwest



The Columbia River Basin, which once sustained 10-18 million salmon and a wide variety of native fish, has experienced significant change in the past 150 years. Rapid population growth, development, and the construction and operation of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers and their tributaries have had devastating consequences for our once abundant salmon and other native fish, and many salmon runs are at high risk of extinction. This extensive deterioration has enormous consequences for Tribal Nations, recreational and commercial fishermen, and all who call the Northwest home, including reduced watershed health vital for community and ecosystem resilience to a changing climate. It is a crisis that requires an urgent and substantial response.

The Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative (CBRI or Initiative) is our Tribes and states' collective answer. The "Six Sovereigns" — the four lower Columbia River treaty tribes (Yakama, Umatilla, Nez Perce, and Warm Springs) and the states of Oregon and Washington — jointly developed the CBRI as a science-based comprehensive and durable strategy to restore salmon and other native fish populations to healthy and abundant levels, ensure a clean energy future, support local and regional economic and climate resilience, restore ecosystem function, and honor longstanding unmet commitments to Tribal Nations. This first-of-its-kind proposal offers a pathway forward after more than 25 years of litigation and has enabled a stay of the litigation as we pursue implementation of the Initiative and the initial US Government Commitments in support of it.

The Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative

The CBRI provides a clear vision and urgent, comprehensive strategy to restore salmon, steelhead, and other native fisheries to healthy and abundant levels based on collaboratively-defined regional abundance goals. The regional goals were set by the Columbia Basin Partnership, a coalition of over 30 diverse entities representing all regional sovereigns and economic sectors. Restoring these fisheries is essential to honoring Tribal treaty rights, avoiding extinction, and realizing the substantial economic value of commercial and recreational fisheries across the Northwest. The recent Presidential Memorandum embraces this goal and mandates efforts to ensure alignment across the federal government.

The CBRI calls for advancing the centerpiece actions confirmed by federal scientists (NOAA 2022) as both “essential” and “critical” to salmon rebuilding, including breaching the four lower Snake River dams after replacing their services to rebuild Snake River stocks, reintroducing fish into blocked areas in the Upper Columbia, and improving passage through mainstem dams coupled with improved water quality and quantity and improved tributary habitat and passage for mid-Columbia stocks.

The CBRI also calls for comprehensive estuary and tributary habitat protection and restoration, predator control, hatchery and harvest investments including remedying maintenance backlogs and improving fishery forecasting and monitoring, actions to forecast and mitigate for ocean conditions, and changes to hydrosystem operations to increase fish passage, among other actions. The CBRI includes additional habitat, mitigation, and other actions to rebuild other critical native species such as Pacific Lamprey and sturgeon. Implementing the CBRI requires investment from Congress to nearly double fish and wildlife funding in the basin – an investment that is necessary to honor Tribal treaty obligations and to realize the significant economic benefits associated with healthy fisheries and watersheds.

The CBRI further calls for actions and investments necessary to secure continuity of services associated with lower Snake River restoration prior to dam breaching. With targeted federal investments benefiting the Northwest, the services of the lower Snake River dams can not only be replaced, they can be improved—leaving the Northwest with robust, resilient, and reliable energy, transportation, and irrigation systems as well as healthy and abundant salmon and other fisheries. Finally, the CBRI calls for centering Tribes and Tribal justice in the strategy to rebuild healthy and abundant salmon and other native fisheries, and the federal actions that implement the strategy.

The CBRI is a product of the Northwest, informed by decades of collective experience from our states and Tribes and developed with the needs of our communities, ecosystems, and economies at its center. It is also consistent with the joint federal-state process from Governor Inslee and Senator Murray and with the proposal by Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID) for salmon restoration.

We must use this unique moment to secure the true win-win outcome for our region that the CBRI embodies. Restoring salmon, steelhead, and other native fish species will uplift the Tribal people who have been the most impacted by federal dams and declining salmon and other native fish populations. At the same time, we can also protect and enhance important economic sectors by investing in our clean energy, agriculture, and transportation systems. But we must act decisively - incremental action will not be effective and will be more costly in the long run.

The rapidly changing economic, energy and climate conditions – not to mention the dire status of the fishery resources - require leaders to plan now so that we can implement transformational change as soon as possible. With the support of the Biden Administration, members of Congress, and other sovereigns and stakeholders throughout the region we must fully implement the CBRI.



COLUMBIA BASIN RESTORATION INITIATIVE

NEZ PERCE • OREGON • UMATILLA • WARM SPRINGS • WASHINGTON • YAKAMA

US GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE CBRI

The US Government (USG) has committed to specific next steps to support the CBRI, and to continue to work in partnership with our Tribes and states and others in the region to further implement the CBRI. The USG Commitments include critical initial steps to begin restoring salmon, replacing the services provided by the dams, and meeting electricity needs with new, clean energy resources.

Restoring Salmon, Steelhead, and Other Native Fish and Wildlife

- BPA is committing an additional \$100 million for fish and wildlife programs such as habitat restoration and \$200 million to maintain and modernize hatcheries funded through the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan.
- USG will help restore ecosystem function by funding, for example: Enloe Dam removal analysis; culvert removals on federal and WA state lands; fish passage improvements; cold water refuge assessments and projects; and habitat restoration projects.
- The USG will also convene fish and wildlife managers to discuss and recommend changes to the structure of fish and wildlife restoration and mitigation programs in the basin.
- The USG will implement operational changes to the hydrosystem that will benefit some salmon species, but will harm others. These operational changes are a bridge to a long term solution, but are not sustainable if the long term solution is delayed or deferred.

Minimizing Rate Pressure

- BPA estimates that the rate impact from the USG Commitments will be a 0.5% increase in 2026, rising to a cumulative increase of 0.9% by 2035. Together with a separate agreement to reintroduce salmon in the Upper Columbia Basin, the two agreements are expected to increase rates by 1.6% in 2026, rising to a cumulative total increase of 2.7% by 2035. BPA acknowledges that these potential rate pressures are likely far lower and less risky than potential outcomes if the stay had not been extended and parties returned to court.

Securing Affordable, Reliable, Climate-Resilient Energy

- The USG will provide technical assistance, discretionary funding, and other support to help the lower Columbia River treaty tribes develop at least 1-3 gigawatts of new clean energy resources, which will count toward replacement energy for the lower Snake River dams.
- The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory will develop a roadmap for achieving the region's decarbonization goals including if Congress authorizes breaching the four lower Snake River dams.
- US DOE and BPA will update and modernize BPA's policies to enable the rapidly advancing regional clean energy transition including interconnection, transmission buildout, and acquisition priorities.

Securing Services Necessary to Replace Services of the Lower Snake River Dams

- Federal agencies, (DOT, USACE, BOR, and USDA) will provide discretionary funding and work in partnership with the State of Washington and other regional sovereigns to plan for replacement and enhancement of the transportation, recreation, and water supply services provided by the lower Snake River dams.

Continued Stakeholder Engagement

- As the replacement service and sector studies and environmental compliance review begin, there will be opportunities for additional engagement from the public, stakeholders, and other sovereigns to help shape solutions.



COLUMBIA BASIN RESTORATION INITIATIVE

NEZ PERCE • OREGON • UMATILLA • WARM SPRINGS • WASHINGTON • YAKAMA