

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8004

As Passed Senate, February 28, 2017

Brief Description: Requesting that certain federal officials prevent the breaching of any dam in the Columbia River system.

Sponsors: Senators Sheldon, Honeyford, Padden, Rossi, Baumgartner, Brown, Rivers, Schoesler, Becker, Hawkins, Braun and Warnick.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Environment & Telecommunications: 1/31/17, 2/01/17 [DP, DNP].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 2/28/17, 26-23.

Brief Summary of Joint Memorial

- Requests the President, Vice President, Congress, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bonneville Power Administration to take any and all action to prevent the breaching of any dam in the Columbia River System.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Ericksen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Brown, Honeyford and Short.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Carlyle, Ranking Minority Member; Hobbs, Ranker and Wellman.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) operate, maintain, and transmit hydroelectric power from 14 federal multiple purpose dams and related facilities located throughout the Columbia River Basin. In total, these dams generate enough electricity to power about \$7 million homes.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, and BPA intend to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the Columbia River system operations and configurations for 14 federal projects in the interior Columbia Basin.

The three agencies will present a reasonable range of alternatives for long-term system operations and evaluate the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts on flood risk management, irrigation, power generation, navigation, fish and wildlife, cultural resources and recreation. The deadline to provide public comment on the EIS has been extended to February 7, 2017.

Summary of Joint Memorial: The Senate Joint Memorial recognizes the importance of the Columbia River system for the security and prosperity of the state, and expresses concern that breaching any dam in the system would significantly alter system operations and severely diminish hydroelectric power generation, irrigation, navigation, flood risk management, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits the system currently provides to the people of Washington.

The Joint Memorial asks the President, Vice President, Congress, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bonneville Power Administration to take any and all action to prevent the breaching of any dam in the Columbia River system.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There is no basis to breach or remove the dams under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We are grateful that salmon and farming coexist today. Over one-half of wheat barged on the river system moves through the dams. Removing dams would require many trucks or trains to move the wheat. Carbon-free, renewable energy is generated from hydropower. It is affordable and attracts business. Dams work in concert with wind and solar. We are not sure how we meet greenhouse gas limits in statute without dams. Spending resources to replace the dams is investing in the wrong place. It would also require replacing the hydropower with new baseload power.

CON: Only the the lower four dams are slated for removal and they produce less than 5 percent of the power supply. Dams exact a toll on salmon, and tribal and fishing communities. Salmon have supported Native Americans for centuries. The fish are at risk of extinction. Commercial fisherman depend on the health of the Columbia River salmon for their livelihood. This motion is premature. The court order is requiring agencies to look at alternatives. We need a more thorough evaluation of options, among them the removal of the dams. But it should be studied under NEPA process so that future decisions can be based on facts for each alternative. It is critical for federal agencies to look at all alternatives. The EIS will help understand the cost and benefits. Allow the EIS to continue. It is a full and fair

process. Arbitrarily removing options at this stage doesn't make sense and moves away from durable and effective solutions.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Tim Sheldon, Prime Sponsor; Diana Carlen, Washington Association of Wheat Growers; Isaac Kastama, Benton/Franklin PUD.

CON: Joseph Bogaard, Executive Director, Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition; Amanda J Grondin, Commercial Fisherman; Joni Bosh, NW Energy Coalition; Bruce Wishart, Sierra Club.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.