



Environmental Impact Statement P.O. Box 2870, Portland, OR 97208-2870 1-800-290-5033

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

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For Release: February 28, 2020

Federal agencies release Columbia River System Operations draft environmental impact statement and preferred alternative

Comment period open February 28—April 13, 2020

Portland, Ore. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration today released the Columbia River System Operations draft environmental impact statement for a 45-day public review and comment period. The draft includes the Preferred Alternative for the operations, maintenance and configuration of the 14 federal dam and reservoir projects that comprise the Columbia River System.

The Preferred Alternative comprises operational and structural measures that allow federal agencies to operate the integrated System to meet congressionally authorized purposes and EIS objectives, including those that benefit Endangered Species Act-listed species. The DEIS identifies and evaluates a no-action alternative and five alternatives, one of which includes breaching the four lower Snake River dams.

The DEIS is the result of more than three years of regional collaboration between the lead federal agencies and more than 30 Tribes and state, federal and county agencies in this National Environmental Policy Act process.

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“The draft EIS represents a remarkable collaborative effort to gather public input and information for a current and thorough analysis of options that meet the goals of the EIS and our future responsibilities to the region,” said Brig. Gen. D. Peter Helmlinger, Northwestern Division commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“We could not have reached this important milestone without the expertise and input of the many cooperating agencies that have participated in this process,” said BPA Administrator Elliot Mainzer. “This was truly a regional effort, and we are especially grateful to our tribal partners for providing their perspectives and expertise on the Columbia River System,” added Mainzer.

The last comprehensive update to the operating strategy for the Columbia River System was issued in 1995. This DEIS responds to the need to review and update management of the System and evaluate impacts to resources in the context of new information and changed conditions in the Columbia River Basin. The document contains detailed analyses of environmental, social and economic benefits and consequences to affected resources of the alternatives considered for improved integrated operations.

“I commend the team for its commitment to identifying a Preferred Alternative that balances the System’s authorized purposes and our resource, legal and institutional obligations,” said Reclamation Regional Director Lorri Gray. “This is a significant accomplishment, made possible by the hard work and strong partnership with organizations throughout the Region and among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration.”

The U.S. Congress authorized the Corps and Reclamation to construct, operate and maintain the 14 federal dams as one interconnected system to meet multiple specified purposes, including flood risk management, navigation, hydropower generation, irrigation, fish and wildlife conservation, recreation and municipal and industrial water supply. BPA is authorized to market and transmit the power generated by coordinated System operations.

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Built and put into service between 1938 and 1976, these dams provide valuable social and economic benefits to the region by providing flood risk management to reduce the risk to lives, property and infrastructure during flood events.

- The river's navigation system is an important component of the regional economy, allowing farmers to export grain and other crops grown in interior parts of the United States to overseas markets. Cruise line operators also use the river for tourism, a growing business on the Columbia and Snake rivers.
- The System is the source of economical, reliable and clean power generation and provides the region with some of the least greenhouse gas intensive electricity in the country. On average, the System produces 8,500 average megawatts of carbon-free power (equivalent to the power needs of eight cities the size of Seattle).
- The Columbia River and its tributaries provide water for millions of people throughout the river basin. Farmers depend on System water to irrigate crops that contribute to the national economy.

Substantive public input will contribute toward a final EIS which further meets the EIS' objectives, and complies with NEPA. Responses to substantive comments will be included in the final EIS, expected in summer 2020. Records of decision documenting final recommended actions will be issued in September 2020.

Options to view the Draft EIS

View online at

- crso.info
- cdxnodengn.epa.gov/cdx-enepa-ll/public/action/eis/search (EPA's searchable EIS database)

View electronically at a public library

- Find the library closest to you at crso.info

Request a CD-ROM, flash-drive of the DEIS or a paper copy of the Executive Summary

- Send an email to info@crso.info*

*Do not email comments to info@crso.info or to any of the co-lead agencies. Email will not be entered into the record as a comment; use the other methods described here.

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Options to submit comments

The comment period closes April 13, 2020

Online

Visit crso.info to access the online comment form

Written comment via postal mail, postmarked by April 13, 2020, to:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Attn: CRSO EIS

P.O. Box 2870, Portland, OR 97208-2870

At a public comment meeting – comment methods available

Written Comments

- Computers for online submittal
- Comment forms
- Collection box

Verbal Comments (2 minutes max)

Privately and publicly recorded

Written via delivery to:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Attn: CRSO EIS

1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Portland, OR 97232

Public Comment Meetings. Doors open 4 p.m.

Lewiston, Idaho	March 17	Red Lion Hotel, 621 21st St.
Kennewick, Wash.	March 18	Red Lion Hotel, 1101 N. Columbia Center Blvd.
Seattle, Wash.	March 19	Hilton Seattle Airport, 17620 International Blvd.
Spokane, Wash.	March 25	DoubleTree City Center, 322 N. Spokane Falls Ct.
Kalispell, Mont.	March 26	Red Lion, 20 N. Main St.
Portland, Ore.	March 31	Oregon Convention Center, 777 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. (<i>east entrance</i>)

4-8 p.m.

- Provide written and private verbal comments

5:15-8 p.m.

- Provide public verbal comments
To provide verbal comment publicly, please sign in to receive a lottery ticket.
Speaking order will be determined by ticket drawing.

Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations or translation services can be made available at these meetings with 72-hour advance notice. Please call 800-622-4519 or email a request to info@crso.info.

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