

American Whitewater • Columbia River Bioregional Education Project

- Conservation Northwest

February 18, 2022

Secretary Deb Haaland
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Honorable Secretary Haaland:

We write to you as organizations who have an interest in the future of the Similkameen River and the fate of Enloe Dam, a derelict structure that blocks access to anadromous fish habitat and sits on land administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

Originally constructed for hydropower a century ago, the Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River has not generated electricity since 1958. Despite several attempts by Okanogan PUD to re-energize the dam, the PUD Board of Commissioners officially pulled the plug on the project in November 2018 after determining that reconstructing the hydropower plant was not economical.

The dam remains in place, however, and continues to block access to 348 miles of potential salmon and steelhead habitat in the upper watershed. As water temperatures increase in response to climate change, cold-water refugia such as those available on the upper Similkameen are more important than ever for threatened steelhead and endangered spring chinook salmon survival in the Upper Columbia River Basin. Removing this dam would open passage to an entire system of tributaries in upstream, cold-water habitat. It would be the single most significant action for recovery of steelhead in the Upper Columbia River basin. In addition, the dam desecrates a site of cultural significance to the Colville Confederated Tribes and the neighboring Lower and Upper Similkameen Indian Bands.

While dam removal has been discussed in the past, we believe a need exists for federal leadership from Department of Interior agencies to take advantage of federal funding opportunities. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 includes \$800 million for dam removal that is distributed among a number of programs including \$200 million under the US Fish and Wildlife National Fish Passage Program.

Prioritizing this project presents an important opportunity to both restore river health and advance environmental justice issues with indigenous communities. We ask for your leadership in making the removal of Enloe Dam and restoration of the Similkameen River a priority for the Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,

Thomas O'Keefe, PhD
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

Dr. Deborah Jensen
Executive Director
Audubon Washington

Stuart Rick Gillespie
Vice-Chairman/Secretary
Columbia River Bioregional Education Project

Mitch Freidman
Executive Director
Conservation Northwest

Lorah Super
Program Director
Methow Valley Citizens Council

Art Campbell
Board President
North Central Washington Audubon Society

Warren Colyer
Western Water and Habitat Program Director
Trout Unlimited

OTHERS

cc:

Tracy Stone Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management

Martha Williams, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service