

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 2, 2026

Travis Kavulla
Bonneville Power Administration
905 NE 11th Ave
Portland, Oregon
9732

Dear Administrator Kavulla:

We write to express our significant concern with the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) recent decision to end its participation in the Select Area Fisheries Management (SAFE) program. The SAFE program has been operational since 1993, providing reliable stocks of Spring chinook and coho salmon for Pacific Northwest commercial and recreational fisheries. We strongly urge BPA to reconsider its actions and commit to renewing its SAFE program contracts to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Clatsop County.

The loss of SAFE program funding from BPA puts the entire program at risk and is anticipated to have devastating, regional impacts on Columbia River native fish populations. Hatcheries are a critical regional resource. Estimates show that approximately 80% of the salmon and steelhead that return to the Columbia River Basin were hatched and reared in fish hatcheries.¹ The SAFE program produces millions of hatchery fish each year, providing relief for stocks of Endangered Species Act-listed fish while also supporting the region's world class commercial fishing industries and recreational fishers alike.

When BPA shared its intent to terminate the SAFE program with its non-federal sponsors, the agency provided its partners with less than four months to accommodate for the loss of this critical stream of funding. However, work to produce next year's stock of hatchery fish has already begun. BPA's decision to no longer support the SAFE program will jeopardize seven million fish that are currently being raised to be released into rivers next spring and will no longer be able to be supported by current funding schemes. It is likely that the hatchery will have to be closed and fish may be culled.

Further, the Northwest Power & Conservation Council, the organization that provides advice to BPA on its activities to mitigate the loss of fish populations, has long supported the SAFE program. In its most recent recommendations to BPA, the Council recommended that BPA renew its contracts for the program to continue to address the loss of salmon populations in the Columbia Basin.² It is disappointing that BPA cannot heed the advice of the organization designed to work with partners on this regional issue.

We urge BPA to reconsider its decision to walk back on its partnership with regional stakeholders to support fish mitigation activities through the SAFE program. Without strong collective action, communication, and trust, the hardworking stakeholders in the region won't be able to overcome challenges of diminishing salmon populations and energy security. Further, walking back on the SAFE program stands in opposition to the President's Executive Order 14276 on Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness. We encourage BPA to

¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). (2024, August 15). *Federal Columbia River Power System Mitigation Actions*. NOAA Fisheries. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/endangered-species-conservation/federal-columbia-river-power-system-mitigation-actions>

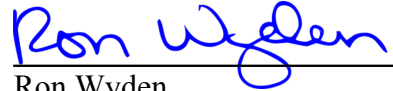
² Independent Scientific Review Panel for the Northwest Power & Conservation Council. (2022, February 10). *Final Report: Review of Anadromous Fish Habitat and Hatchery*. P.88-91.

fulfill its obligations, and renew its contracts with ODFW, WDFW, and Clatsop County to provide certainty in critical fish stocks in our region.

Sincerely,



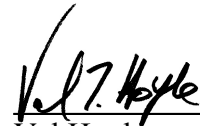
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



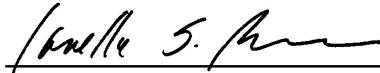
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Janelle S. Bynum
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter, M.D.
Member of Congress