



# Media Release

**For Immediate Release**  
**July 25, 2017**

## **Mason County Utilities Support Balanced, Focused Columbia River Management**

(MASON COUNTY, WA) – Mason County’s two public utility districts have thrown their support behind federal legislation to ensure steady and reliable management of the Columbia River system for power, fish and wildlife, flood control, recreation, and shipping.

Mason PUD 1 and Mason PUD 3 adopted resolutions today (July 25) in support of “House Resolution 3144.” The measure requires federal agencies to follow the current Columbia River management plan. Congressional sponsors include: U.S. Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Dan Newhouse (R-WA), Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA), Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and Greg Walden (R-OR).

Benton PUD and Franklin PUD, based in the Tri-Cities, have also approved resolutions supporting the federal proposal.

There have been concerns in the Pacific Northwest that moving from a focused approach to one, which suggests experimental measures that may affect reliable energy production, threaten successful salmon restoration efforts, and increase power costs for electricity customers throughout the region.

The legislation would require federal agencies responsible for river management to operate the hydro system in line with a plan implemented in 2014 for salmon recovery, hydropower generation, flood control, shipping, and recreation. The plan would remain the guideline for river system operations through 2022, unless replaced under an evaluation process now underway.

Despite the success of the current river management plan, Judge Simon, United States District Court for the District of Oregon, rejected it and ruled more options need to be reviewed. This could include breaching or removing one or more of the four Snake River dams.

“If approved, the bill will provide relief to what seems like endless lawsuits filed over federal hydro system operations,” said Linda Gott, Mason PUD 3 Commissioner. “The management of the Columbia River system has been scrutinized and supported by top scientists through several presidential administrations. Changes in dam operations by using new fish passage technologies have resulted in wild salmon numbers trending significantly upward.”

“BPA has spent \$15.28 billion on infrastructure and fish mitigation projects since 1978,” said Jack Janda, Mason PUD 1 commissioner. “All of that money comes from rates paid by Pacific Northwest public power customers through their electricity bills.”

## Background

The federal legislation H.R. 3144 - "To provide for operations of the Federal Columbia River Power System pursuant to a certain operation plan for a specified period of time":

1. Offers a creative solution that is good for both listed salmon and the economy of the Pacific Northwest and Mason County.
2. Provides relief from continuous litigation over federal hydro system operations by directing federal agencies to implement the current federal salmon plan, known as the 2014 Supplemental BiOp. The BiOp was scrutinized and supported by the Obama Administration's top scientists. It has resulted in wild salmon numbers trending significantly upward due to changes in operations, and installation of new passage technologies.
3. Provides time for federal agencies to complete court-ordered National Environmental Protection Act environmental review processes analyzing federal hydro system operations, and focuses the general agencies limited resources on determining correct solutions.
4. Without the legislation, the agencies would be compelled to author a new 2018 BiOp without the benefit of the new science and public input provided by the comprehensive NEPA review.
5. Avoids experiments or spill tests at eight Columbia and Snake River dams (dams); studies and modifications at the dams which would restrict electrical generation; and which creates uncertainties in BPA's power costs and supply, thus affecting Pacific Northwest electric customers' rates.

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*Incorporated in 1934, Mason County PUD No. 1 was the first public utility district formed in Washington State. PUD 1 provides non-for-profit water, sewer and electric services to approximately 7,200 customers in both Mason and Jefferson counties. The District's mission is to provide customers with safe, reliable and valued utility services.*

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