

March 14, 2018

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

On behalf of America's electric cooperatives, I write to express strong support for H.R. 3144 to require federal agencies responsible for the management of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) to operate the hydropower system in a manner consistent with the current operations plan.

Fifty-four rural electric cooperatives in seven Western states receive reliable federal hydropower from the FCRPS. For this reason, NRECA opposes actions that bring continued uncertainty to the FCRPS and the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) future hydropower operations. For decades, there has been uncertainty over the operations of existing hydropower in the Pacific Northwest due to federal regulations, court orders and other administrative decisions. This continued uncertainty to the FCRPS continues to affect BPA's future power generation, rates and reliability in the region, and in turn the cooperative systems that depend upon it for reliable and affordable electric service to their communities.

The FCRPS is paramount to power generation in the Pacific Northwest, and to California, Nevada, Wyoming and Montana. The FCRPS is the largest source of clean, renewable electricity in the Pacific Northwest. It encompasses 31 multi-purpose federally-owned dams along the Columbia and Snake Rivers and accounts for nearly 40 percent of total U.S. hydroelectric generation. Its hydropower not only provides energy for baseload needs and peak times, but also serves as a backup generation source for intermittent wind and solar power. This gives the Pacific Northwest and our cooperatives an environmental edge unmatched elsewhere in the country—as a non-CO<sub>2</sub> emitting resource. But due to the long-standing litigation surrounding the FCRPS for Endangered Species Act-listed salmon and steelhead, there continues to be uncertainty over BPA's future hydropower operations. Specifically, BPA's fish and wildlife mitigation program continues to be a significant cost driver which adversely affects our cooperatives' abilities to provide affordable electricity.

Since 1978, BPA has committed nearly \$15.9 billion to support Northwest fish and wildlife recovery. BPA's fish and wildlife mitigation program is the largest in the nation, and quite possibly the world. Each year, cooperatives and ratepayers fund BPA's habitat restoration efforts to open valuable habitat in the Columbia River estuary and tributaries, add water to streams, and support cool water temperatures. In 2012, BPA directly invested more than \$450 million to address the impacts of federal dams. These activities included protecting land and water habitat, implementing projects across the Columbia River Basin, and supporting better fish passage. Specifically, BPA has made huge long-term investments in

large-scale structural and operational changes to further improve existing fish passage routes as well as to provide new, safe passage structures to these dams.

Therefore, by upholding the 2014 Supplemental Biological Opinion, H.R. 3144 appropriately balances environmental and economic demands while also protecting existing hydropower resources in the Pacific Northwest. For these and other reasons, NRECA urges support for H.R. 3144 in committee and swift advancement to the House floor.

Sincerely,



Jim Matheson  
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

CC: Speaker Paul Ryan  
Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi  
Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Congressman Kurt Schrader