



“The Voice of Oregon's Wheat Producers Since 1926”

OREGON WHEAT GROWERS LEAGUE

115 SE 8th Street 📍 Pendleton, OR 97801 📞 541.276.7330 🌐 www.owgl.org

January 29, 2024

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chairwoman, Committee on Energy and
Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy
and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Duncan
Chairman, Energy, Climate, and Grid
Security Subcommittee
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Ranking Member, Energy, Climate, and
Grid Security Subcommittee
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter for the record for the House Energy and Commerce Committee Energy, Climate, And Grid Security Subcommittee hearing scheduled for January 30, 2024. The Oregon Wheat Growers League is a nonprofit trade association that represents the nearly 2,000 farms across the state producing wheat. We are fully supportive of maintaining and enhancing operations of the locks and dams system on the Columbia Snake River System.

The Columbia Snake River System is the nation's single largest wheat export gateway, transporting over half of all U.S. wheat to markets overseas. Oregon wheat producers, in particular, rely heavily on the system as more than 85% of Oregon's wheat production is bound for export markets. The ability to barge products along the Columbia Snake River System is vital for enabling Oregon to compete in international markets and to support domestic and international food security objectives.

Our customers rely on timely delivery of Oregon wheat. Our ability to meet the needs of our customers requires the predictability and reliability offered by barging along the river system. It is also the most cost-effective. Without competitive river transportation, expenses will increase for grain suppliers and shippers and those costs will be borne by farmers. Setting aside the fact that no realistic proposals have been made during the process to address the insufficient rail and road infrastructure, a shift from barge to road and rail transport would result in substantial cost increases for transporting grain. Rail and truck transportation for wheat costs significantly

more on a per bushel basis and reducing competition by eliminating barging can only be expected to drive these costs higher for farmers.

In addition to the direct and devastating harm that would be caused to agricultural producers, the impacts would have far-reaching consequences. Barging is our most fuel-efficient mode of transportation and has the lowest emissions. Further, barging is the safest method of moving cargo, with a lower number of injuries, fatalities and spill rates than both rail and trucks. It would take over 100,000 semi-truck trailers to replace the wheat shipped on the Snake River via barge annually.

Throughout the most recent process, our voice and the voices of other agricultural interests were largely excluded from discussion. Yet the impacts and commitments for funding and mitigation will have direct impact to us. We are concerned that our perspectives could not be adequately represented. We seek to engage in efforts that can arrive at a durable solution that protects the integrity of the dams and the health of salmon, allowing us to simultaneously support a thriving river and thriving communities.

Hydroelectric dams, navigation locks, and salmon can and do co-exist and we support a balanced system. We support the investments made at the federal and state levels into solutions that recognize the importance of the river system and substantially contribute to the improvement of fish runs, along with the long-term viability of our agricultural economy. We support retention of the essential infrastructure provided by the locks and dams along the Columbia Snake River system and the capability to move grain to markets efficiently, safely and sustainably.

Sincerely,

A stylized logo featuring a central wheat stalk with two ears, set against a background of vertical lines. The logo is enclosed in a rounded rectangular frame. A handwritten signature, "Wade Bingaman", is written across the middle of the logo.

Wade Bingaman, President
Oregon Wheat Growers League