



TRUMP ADMINISTRATION REPUDIATES FEDERAL COMMITMENTS TO COLUMBIA BASIN SALMON RESTORATION

Yakama Nation expresses concern over impacts to Treaty obligations and Columbia Basin fisheries.

June 12, 2025 - TOPPENISH, WA. The Trump Administration today issued a [Presidential Memorandum](#) terminating the federal government's December 2023 Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement with the Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce tribes, and the states of Washington and Oregon. This landmark agreement supported federal investments in a comprehensive plan for salmon restoration, energy development, and transportation infrastructure in the Columbia Basin. Crucially, it also provided a long-term stay of ongoing Endangered Species Act litigation over federal hydrosystem operations – litigation the United States has consistently lost in federal court for the past several decades.

“The Administration’s abrupt termination of the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement jeopardizes not only tribal Treaty-reserved resources but also the stability of energy, transportation, and water resources essential to the region’s businesses, farms, and families,” stated Yakama Tribal Council Chairman Gerald Lewis. “This agreement was designed to foster collaborative and informed resource management and energy development in the Pacific Northwest, including significant tribal energy initiatives. The Administration’s decision to terminate these commitments echoes the federal government’s historic pattern of broken promises to tribes, and is contrary to President Trump’s stated commitment to domestic energy development.”

“The Yakama Nation is deeply disappointed by this unilateral decision to terminate the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement, particularly without prior consultation,” Chairman Lewis emphasized. “The federal government’s historic river management approach is unsustainable and will lead to salmon extinction. Courtroom battles cannot provide the innovative, holistic solutions we need. This termination will severely disrupt vital fisheries restoration efforts, eliminate certainty for hydro operations, and likely result in increased energy costs and regional instability.”

“The Yakama Nation remains committed to collaborative efforts to restore healthy and abundant Columbia Basin fisheries, working alongside our tribal, state, federal, and regional partners,” affirmed Yakama Fish & Wildlife Committee Chair Jeremy Takala. “The economic and ecological well-being of our region and our Nation depends on healthy salmon populations, as mandated by our Treaty rights. We reserved the right to actually *catch* fish, not merely the right to dip our nets into barren waters.”

Background Information:

The Yakama Nation, with approximately 12,000 members, has long history of defending its Treaty fishing rights, spanning from the Washington Territorial Court in the 1880's¹ to the U.S. Supreme Court.² Recognizing that legal victories alone cannot restore fish populations, the Yakama Nation has forged partnerships and invested significantly in Columbia Basin fisheries recovery. (Information on Yakama Nation Fisheries programs is available at <https://yakamafish-nsn.gov/>.)

Reliable and affordable energy, transportation, and water are vital to the Yakama Nation's economy and its members. The Yakama Nation operates tribal enterprises, including: Yakama Forest Products, which harvests and mills around 88 million board feet of lumber each year; Yakama Nation Farms, which cultivates nearly 2000 acres and produces organic and conventionally grown fresh produce crops for wholesale and community food distribution purposes; and Yakama Power, which delivers electricity to more than 3000 customers located on the Yakama Reservation, and is a member of the regional Public Power Council.

The United States' [December 14, 2023 Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement](#) ("RCBA") with the Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce tribes, and the states of Washington and Oregon (commonly, the "Six Sovereigns" for ease of reference) was negotiated in a confidential federal mediation arising from the proceedings in *National Wildlife Federation, et al., v. National Marine Fisheries Service, et al.*, Case No. 3:01-cv-0640-SI (D. Or.). The RCBA provided a package of initial federal commitments (the "USG Commitments") in support of [the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative \("CBRI"\)](#) developed by the Six Sovereigns during the mediation to address fundamental issues underlying the decades-long litigation. (More information on the CBRI is available at: <https://critfc.org/cbri/>)

Power and industry groups expressed concerns that regional energy costs would increase because of the specific funding commitments made by the Bonneville Power Administration ("BPA") in the RCBA. However, an application of BPA's analysis of ratepayer impacts of the RCBA shows that the potential increase for an average residential customer receiving 100% of their power from BPA would only be twenty-four cents (¢24) per month. The Northwest Power and Conservation Council's analysis also showed that the negotiated hydrosystem operations in the RCBA resulted in a small overall cost savings as compared to the hydrosystem operations under the federal government's 2020 Columbia River System Operations Record of Decision.

Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead fisheries support a multi-billion-dollar sportfishing economy, as well as significant tribal and non-tribal commercial and subsistence fisheries throughout the Pacific Northwest. Columbia Basin salmon are caught both in the Columbia River Basin, as well as in ocean fisheries from Oregon up to Alaska.

¹ See e.g., *United States v. Taylor*, 3 Wash. Terr. 88 (1887).

² See e.g., *United States v. Winans*, 198 U.S. 371 (1905).