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Statement from the Idaho Conservation League regarding Fall River Electric Cooperative and the federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Columbia and Snake River dam system.

In a recent email, Fall River Electric Cooperative encouraged its members to support the federal government's plan to maintain the four lower Snake River dams in Washington State. The Idaho Conservation League respectfully has a different view and believes the federal plan consists of minor changes to the status quo, which does little to prevent Idaho's salmon and steelhead from eventual extinction or protect co-op members from an increasingly uncompetitive Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). Major changes to the status quo are needed to save both Idaho's fish and protect federal energy system customers, like Fall River Electric members, from rising prices.

The Idaho Conservation League wants to restore sustainable, harvestable populations of salmon and steelhead to Idaho. This goal is not at odds with Idaho's access to affordable energy.

ICL reached out to Fall River and other BPA customers in February before the COVID-19 crisis hit. We sent a letter letting them know that we want to talk to them, listen to their perspectives, and better understand their needs and concerns. The fate of Idaho's salmon and steelhead and Idaho's access to affordable electricity are intertwined and this is a challenge to be solved together.

We certainly have an agenda: we want to restore sustainable, harvestable populations of salmon and steelhead in Idaho. And, we believe that the sort of change required to restore salmon and steelhead is connected to the change and support needed to modernize BPA and the federal dams. Without change, BPA's customers, including Fall River's, face higher energy prices with no end in sight. [BPA's wholesale rates have already risen 30% since 2008.](#) Without change, Idaho's fish will continue to spiral toward extinction.

We don't believe our fish goals need to be at odds with regional utility goals, such as Fall River's. It's time to move away from the "us vs. them" mentality that has dominated the salmon and steelhead and energy issue for decades.

The fate of Idaho's salmon and steelhead and Idaho's access to affordable electricity are intertwined. We'd still like to talk about alternatives with Fall River and other BPA customers that better serve Idaho fish and Idaho utilities so we can begin a dialogue and find solutions that work for all of our interests and shared goals.

If you agree with our collaborative and collective approach to finding salmon and energy solutions that work for all of us, please let the Fall River Electric Cooperative's board know that you support Idaho's salmon and steelhead and oppose the status quo when it comes to the federal dam system on the Columbia and Snake rivers. Also let them know that co-op leaders should engage with conservation and other groups, like the Idaho Conservation League, who want to begin a dialogue and find solutions together. You can find your board member by district and their contact info at this website: <http://www.fallriverelectric.com/board-of-directors-and-territories/> or call 208.652.7431.

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