



February 8, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
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Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Governor Kate Brown
Office of the Governor
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Salem, OR 97301

Senator Maria Cantwell
Washington DC Office
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Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ron Wyden
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Washington, D.C., 20510

Senator Patty Murray
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Senator Jeff Merkely
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RE: Opposition to Rye Development's proposed Goldendale Energy Storage Hydroelectric Project (Klickitat County, Washington)

Dear Governors Inslee and Brown, and Senators Cantwell, Murray, Wyden, and Merkely,

As elected officials committed to combating the climate crisis, we urge you to stand in solidarity with sovereign Tribal Nations and oppose an alleged “green energy” development that will sacrifice irreplaceable tribal cultural and religious resources for an uncertain benefit to our climate. Rye Development, LLC wants to build the largest pumped storage development in the Northwest: the Goldendale Energy Storage Hydroelectric Project in Klickitat County, Washington, near the John Day Dam. Columbia Riverkeeper, Washington and Oregon Chapters of the Sierra Club, Friends of the White Salmon, Audubon Society of Portland, Washington and Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Center for Environmental Law & Policy, Food and Water Watch, Northwest Environmental Defense Center, Friends of the Toppenish Creek, Northwest Environmental Advocates, Rogue Climate, 350PDX, and Waterkeeper Alliance respectfully request that you oppose this project and conduct robust government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations, including the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (Warm Springs).

This development will obliterate irreplaceable tribal cultural resources, “including archeological, ceremonial, burial, petroglyph, monumental and ancestral use sites.”¹ According to Yakama Nation’s archaeological resource survey, completed in 2019, the development would directly interfere with multiple culturally significant sites to the Yakama Nation and other cultural property. In explaining the Yakama Nation’s opposition at a Washington State Senate hearing earlier this year, a representative from the Nation said:

As you’re aware, the Columbia River was dammed over the last century. In doing so, that impacted many of our rights, interests and resources. All of these things have been impacted: our fish sites, our villages, our burial sites up and down the river. This is another example of energy development, development in the West, that comes at a cost to the Yakama Nation.²

Rye Development has worked hard to muddle public opinion on the Yakama Nation’s position on this project and the Tribe, in comment letters to FERC, has gone as

¹ Letter from Yakama Nation to Erik Steimle (Feb. 14, 2018), *In* FERC Docket No. 14861

² Courtney Flatt, OPB, *Northwest Clean-Energy Advocates Eye Pumped Hydro to Fill Gaps, with Tribes Noting Concerns* (July 27 2020)

far as to say that the developer is not operating in good faith.³ The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) has also weighed in on the development. While most letters submitted by CTUIR have been filed confidentially to protect tribal cultural resources, the Tribe has publicly said that “the proposed undertaking is within a historic property of cultural and religious significance,” and are poised to conduct their own cultural resources survey of the area. On October 16, 2020, the Nez Perce Tribe requested that Rye conduct an ethnographic study to identify any Nez Perce-specific resources in the Project area that could be affected by construction of the project, stating that because the Tribe did not know about the development they did not have the opportunity to submit study requests to determine detrimental impacts to their Tribe.⁴ On October 29, 2020, FERC directed Rye to conduct that survey. Our organizations urge you to oppose this development because of the unavoidable and detrimental impacts to tribal cultural and religious resources.

Additionally, wildlife experts from state and federal agencies have also weighed in, raising serious concerns about the development’s impacts to wildlife, including golden and bald eagles, and water quality.

Furthermore, due to a combination of rising construction costs and decreasing open-market energy prices, the development cannot provide renewable energy integration and replacement capacity to support regional clean energy goals affordably and reliably. Washington’s ongoing deep decarbonization analysis has not identified this project as needed to meet the state’s regional clean energy goals. In turn, irreplaceable tribal cultural resources will be lost with no benefit to our climate. Rye Development’s claims, trumpeting this development as “green energy” are dubious at best.

In summary, we urge you to oppose this development. In addition and attached as Appendix A, we have included 1,728 comments from the public asking you to oppose this development. Alleged “green energy” cannot be built on the backs of Tribal Nations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

³ Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Comment to FERC, (Feb. 21, 2019), *In* FERC Docket No. 1486.

⁴ Letter from Patrick Baird to FERC (Oct. 16, 2020), *In* FERC Docket No. 14861. See *Also* Telephone Memo from Suzanne Novak to FERC (Oct. 7, 2020), *In* FERC Docket No. 14861.



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Indi Namkoong (she/her)
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350PDX

Bart Mihailovich
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cc: Delano Saluskin, Yakama Nation Chairman
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John Shellenberger, Yakama Nation Archaeologist
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