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Washington Environmental Review Validates Yakama Nation Concerns

State Department Of Ecology Finds That Goldendale Pump Storage Project Will Create Significant And Unavoidable Harm To Tribal Resources

Toppenish, Wash. – The Yakama Nation Tribal Council Chairman cautions that the Department of Ecology’s (“Ecology”) Final Environmental Impact Statement (“FEIS”), released December 21, 2022, “is one step in a long process towards protecting sacred and legendary sites at *Pushpum*.” The site, also known as Juniper Point, located near Goldendale, Wash., is a place of extraordinary significance to the Yakama People, including many historic and archaeological properties, cultural and ceremonial importance, and sources of traditional food and medicinal roots.

Juniper Point was identified by developers for the proposed construction of an industrial-scale pumped storage project adjacent to the John Day Dam. Ecology began the FEIS public process in January 2021 under the State Environmental Protection Act for the purpose of conducting a thorough analysis of potential project impacts to environmental resources, including to the fish, wildlife, tribal resources, water quality, geology, and view shed. The Project’s proposed 680-acre development area includes two embankment reservoirs, with surface area totaling 124 acres, connected by an underground pipeline linking the 2,400-foot vertical separation. The lower reservoir would be located on the contaminated site of the former Columbia Gorge Aluminum plant; and the system is anticipated to consume 2.93 million gallons of Columbia River water for initial fill and 1.27 million gallons each year to offset evaporation and leakage. The Yakama Nation has consistently opposed this proposed construction to Project developers and regulatory entities becoming aware of the proposal in 2018.

Chairman Gerald Lewis continued, “It is the responsibility of the Yakama Nation to protect these resources now and in the future for the benefit of those not yet born. The state’s environmental review validates warnings from the Yakama People about the destruction of legendary sites that are passed down through our traditional songs and legends.”

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Contact: Andrea Tulee, Public Information Officer, Andrea_Tulee@Yakama.com