



May 6, 2021

House Speaker Tina Kotek
900 Court St. NE
Rm. 269
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Honorable Speaker Kotek:

The Yakama Nation supports renewable energy projects that reduce impacts on the already changing climate. Yakama Nation, through the Yakama Power Company supplies electricity to members on and off the reservation using microgrid technology. This microgrid has allowed the Yakama Nation to provide broadband internet connection to our community while addressing climate change using projects that don't require carbon intensive resources nor development of projects on ceded lands. This kind of project has provided a significant infrastructure resource to our community.

For the last couple of years, Rye Development, National Grid, and other groups have been working to garner support for pump storage energy projects in the Columbia Basin. They have repeatedly tried to move an agenda to build a storage project on Yakama Nation ceded lands in Washington and on lands belonging to the Klamath tribe in Oregon. We have communicated with these entities our opposition to the project and ask you to do the same. **We are requesting that you amend language in HB 2021, relating to "storage" or "pump storage" and to exclude renewable energy projects on ceded lands without consultation** from moving forward. Amending HB 2021 to address our concerns about renewable projects on ceded lands, is to acknowledge the threat that they have on our cultural resources. Our reasoning is listed below because **you cannot make cultural resources renewable**.

The non-emitting generation resources promoted by HB 2021 must exclude projects that fail to mitigate or avoid natural, environmental, and cultural resource destruction. Promoting non-carbon based energy sources at the expense of permanent and irreparable resource damage fails to achieve the environmental justice that is also memorialized in HB 2021. While HB 2021 does not specifically reference the Goldendale or Swan Lake projects, however, it's apparent that the utilization of certain renewable projects includes them in this legislation. The proposed Goldendale pump storage project in Washington, will cause significant and irreversible damage to Yakama root and medicine gathering areas, cultural sites, and places of religious and spiritual significance. The proposed project includes the construction of more than 120 acres-surface area holding ponds that will submerge culturally significant sites and future access for all Yakama People.

These cultural resources and the lands adjacent to the river, are sacred to the Yakama Nation and include archeological, ceremonial, religious and spiritual sites. These sites are called Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs). It's the responsibility of the Yakama Nation to ensure the survivability of TCPs for their grandchildren's-grandchildren. The Goldendale Pump Storage Project has an area of potential effect that damages or destroys nine culturally significant TCP's, including two National Register of Historic Places-eligible sites and a multiple-property documentation in a nationally-designated Archaeological District. HB 2021 must not include long or short-term energy projects that permanently destroy indigenous Treaty-reserved rights, traditional food and ceremonial practices, or endanger Yakama People's way of life.

The Yakama Nation has endured significant losses to our cultural heritage, all without consultation from the United States Government, significant mitigation, or acknowledgment of those losses. To illustrate a more recent history with the United State Government and state government's desire to ignore our existence and cultural heritage, please consider the legacies of Hanford and the Dalles Dam.

The Hanford Nuclear Reservation is the largest nuclear site established during World War II to produce plutonium, which was used to make the first atomic bomb. Hanford is in south-central Washington, on ceded lands belonging to the Yakama Nation. After ceasing operations in 1990, the Hanford Site became the biggest environmental cleanup job in United States History. To this day, there remains an ongoing leak of radioactive materials from Hanford that have significantly impacted human health in Oregon and Washington, including salmon populations, all while federal agencies continue to dodge the responsibility for properly cleaning up this site that is sacred to the Yakama Nation. ¹

When the Columbia River flooded in 1948, the Army Corps of Engineers began work on the Dalles Dam construction from 1952-1957. The Yakama Nation was never consulted on the construction of the Dalles Dam; despite being a co-equal sovereign signatory to the Treaty of 1855, with the United States Government, requiring consultation on such projects. The dam was constructed on ceded lands of the Yakama Nation and involved the elimination of villages, burial grounds, fishing places and ceremonial sites that were used since time immemorial.

Celilo Falls was the trading hub for Native Peoples throughout the Northwest. The Army Corps of Engineers detonated the falls with explosives and drowned it with the erection of the Dalles Dam. *After construction*, the United States negotiated an insignificant settlement with the Yakama Nation for the damage caused by the Dam.² To this day, the Yakama Nation continues to work on salmon restoration and mitigation. The villages that were lost because of the destruction of the falls took the federal government 50 years to build and during that time

¹ <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/doe-abandons-toxic-mess-threatening-columbia-river-yakama-nation-fights-back>

² <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/yakama-lummi-tribal-leaders-call-for-removal-of-three-lower-columbia-river-dams/>

plunged families of the Yakama Nation, the Warm Springs, Nez Perce, and Columbia River Tribes into homelessness and poverty.³

We greatly appreciate that Oregon legislators and environmental advocates want to do more to protect the environment and encourage the utilization of renewable energy sources to eliminate reliance on fossil fuels. We support those efforts to mitigate the impacts on climate change which is already present in all our communities. We respectfully request that in pursuing renewable energy projects that you remove the language pertaining to storage as well as the requirement for them to be located on ceded territorial lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Delano Saluskin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "D".

Delano Saluskin, Chairman
Yakama Nation

³ https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2016/05/celilo_through_the_years.html The Oregonian/OregonLive documented overrun, decrepit, unsafe and unhealthy due to the federal government never fulfilled its obligations to build more housing for the past 80 years.