



December 15, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Cantwell,

As 453 of your constituents and members of diverse religious communities across Washington State, we are writing in support of a collaborative approach regarding the future of the Lower Snake River. We urge you to show strong leadership on behalf of our shared call to uphold tribal treaty rights, support communities, and restore abundant salmon and orca populations.

As you well know, the situation is urgent and we must honor treaty commitments to Northwest tribes. The salmon and orcas entrusted to our care are nearing extinction, and as Rep. Derek Kilmer recently stated, we have a moral obligation to effectively recover both iconic species. Tribal, fishing, farming, and tourism-based communities across the state are also suffering the longer we go without finding a long-term solution for the Lower Snake River.

Restoration efforts to date have proven costly and insufficient, and tribal, federal, and state science continues to show that a free-flowing Lower Snake River will give the salmon their best chance at recovery. The latest FEIS for the Columbia River Operating System states that dam removal would deliver the highest benefit for fish and for upholding our nation's responsibilities to Native American tribes. In this report, the federal agencies admit that a different process is urgently needed – one that has regional leadership and brings all voices to the table.

Collaboration is a value that the faith community holds in high regard. As people of faith, we seek to honor our differences while upholding our interconnectedness to work together for justice. As Pope Francis states in *Laudato Si*, "We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."

Such is the case with restoring the Lower Snake River. We need the region's sovereigns, policymakers, stakeholders, and residents to engage in dialogue to develop real, comprehensive, and inclusive solutions. And we need you to carry our voices into the halls of Congress.

Restoration of a free-flowing Lower Snake River offers an opportunity to develop win-win solutions and infrastructure upgrades that will benefit the entire state. It also allows us to live into our religious values of stewardship and justice while ensuring the health and wellbeing of communities and the environment. As the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam* teaches, we each have a role to play in repairing the world.

We need your leadership to help bring people together and guide a comprehensive investment package through Congress. We cannot wait for another round of litigation on an EIS that does not go far enough – our salmon, orcas, and communities need immediate help. A mindful river and salmon restoration package should include funding for dam removal, irrigation solutions for farmers, highway and rail upgrades to replace river transport, and an expanded clean energy portfolio to replace the power from the four lower Snake River dams.

Please partner with sovereigns, engage stakeholders, and work with fellow policymakers on a regionally led solution to restoring the Lower Snake River.

You have our support in speaking up for investments and actions that not only recover salmon and help feed hungry orcas, but also fulfill obligations to Native tribes, revitalize fishing and farming communities, and maintain an affordable and reliable energy system. The faith community holds hope for the future and prays that we can come together for a solution that works for all.

Thank you for your leadership, especially in these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

LeeAnne Beres
Executive Director, Earth Ministry