October xx, 2017

Mr. XXX

Dear Mr. XXX:

I am writing to you today to share our experiences on a very important water issue here in the Walla Walla Basin. As you know, the basin is located in both Oregon and Washington, and this boundary issue has complicated the possibility of creating protectable instream flows for fisheries requirements. We are presently part of a bi-state study looking to develop projects that provide water for fisheries needs while at the same time keeping irrigated agriculture in the basin intact, the Walla Walla Basin Integrated Flow Enhancement Study.

We have been working with both the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) and the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to find potential solutions to protect instream flows that originate in Oregon, but move downstream to Washington. Without finding a legal mechanism to protect these instream flows, it would be fruitless to spend taxpayer dollars to “create” more water in the basin. Without this legal protection, all our efforts would be for naught, and only provide junior water right holders with additional water, which of course is not the point of the study.

While engaging both OWRD & DOE, we are working with these departments to find solutions to the instream flow protection issue. Guy Gregory and Eric Hartwig (Ecology) and Mike Ladd (OWRD) have been engaged and helpful in working on solutions to this problem. We appreciate that a bi-state meeting occurred in 2016 to discuss option to pilot an effort moving forward. However, in recent months, our sense is that that effort has lagged. When we have inquired about the status of these discussions, both agencies have stated they recognize the importance of this effort, but they due to other priorities and workload issues, they have not been able to expend resources upon this.

While this is understandable, we want to ask you to make this a higher priority for the agency that you supervise. We are about to embark on several items that highlight the importance of this issue, including broadening our caucus of advisors, launching environmental review(SEPA/NEPA), and refinement of alternatives towards selection of a Preferred Alternative this biennium. Absent a bi-State solution on this legal issue, it could cast a chilling effect on our future progress, ability to meet our Flow Targets, and ability to obtain federal funding to match State efforts. We would ask that you commit the necessary internal resources to create a timeline with completion dates for tasks within this complex issue. We hope that would help to keep this discussion “moving forward”.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,