

News Release

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US and Canada preparing to change the Columbia River Treaty

Basin residents encouraged to attend public meetings, learn what's at stake

Spokane – Today the Center for Environmental Law & Policy (CELP) encouraged people who live in the Columbia River Basin to learn more about the process underway to reexamine the Columbia River Treaty (CRT) between the US and Canada. The US and Canada signed the Treaty in 1964 to jointly manage the Columbia River. Under the Treaty, the US paid for 3 "treaty dams" in Canada and built the Libby Dam in Montana for two purposes: to control flooding in the US, and to significantly increase power generation at the 11 U.S. dams downstream. Under the current treaty, in 2024, the burden for downstream flood control shifts from Canada to the US.

The US and Canada are considering whether to terminate the Treaty, continue it with the automatic shift in the responsibility for flood control, or to renegotiate it. The earliest either country can terminate the Treaty is 2024, and only with at least 10 years notice to the other.

For 50 years the Treaty has governed management of the Columbia River for the two purposes of flood control and power generation. During the deliberations and ratification of the CRT, no consideration was given to impacts on fisheries, Tribes and First Nations, or cultural sites. "Times have changed," said Suzanne Skinner, Director of the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, "the US and Canada need to honor their obligations to the Tribes. Thanks to the Tribes, both the US and Canada now agree that restoring the ecological function of the Columbia has to be an equal concern with flood control and power generation. What we have to do now is to make our governments live up to this commitment to restore the waters and wildlife of the once-magnificent Columbia."

Public meetings are underway. By September 2013, both US and Canada intend to complete recommendations for changing the Treaty that controls international management of the Columbia River.

"The Columbia River will not be managed in the future as it is now," said John Osborn, Spokane physician and conservationist. "Changes in flood control outlined in the Treaty combined with climate change and a deteriorating river are drivers for change. Residents of the Columbia River Basin need to be informed and involved. Transparency is needed here."

The US is holding four informational meetings in late June and July:

1. Portland - June 27 Doubletree Hotel, Lloyd Center 1000 NE Multnomah Street
2. Airway Heights (near Spokane) - July 9 Northern Quest Resort 100 N Hayford Rd
3. Boise – July 13 Owyhee Plaza Hotel 1109 Main Street
4. Kalispell - July 18 Red Lion Inn, Kalispell 20 North Main Street

To help Columbia Basin residents prepare for Treaty meetings, CELP has prepared web materials:
<http://www.celp.org/water/CRT/overview.html>

Links:

[Negotiating the Columbia River Treaty - 2014/2024 Review](#)

[CRT: Frequently Asked Questions](#)