



May 10, 2017

House Committee on Energy & Environment

RE: Vote Against Nuclear Protection Rollback Bill, Senate Bill 990

Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Johnson, Vice-Chair Power, and Members of the House Committee on Energy and Environment,

On behalf of Columbia Riverkeeper and our over 12,000 members, I strongly urge you to reject SB 990. The bill would roll back Oregon's long-standing protections against nuclear waste-producing activities. SB 990 is meant to weaken Oregon's voter-approved 1980 moratorium on nuclear power plant construction. This bill has not received the scrutiny it deserves despite its sweeping implications.

Senate Bill 990 would create a special exemption from Oregon's 1980 voter-passed moratorium on nuclear power plant construction for small modular reactors. Instead of requiring a statewide vote, the bill would allow cities and counties to vote for nuclear reactors of 300 megawatts or less without a permanent repository for the high-level radioactive waste they would create. This bill undermines Oregonians' long-standing desire to have a say over nuclear power in our state, the impacts of which could be felt throughout the region.

Small modular reactors create high-level radioactive waste, the storage of which remains an issue nationwide because of the lack of a permanent deep geologic repository. For example, the orphaned waste from PGE's Trojan plant still sits in heavily shielded casks on a concrete pad next to the Columbia River. Like other high-level nuclear waste, the waste produced from any new (even small modular) nuclear reactors faces an unclear disposition path. This is why Oregonians voted in 1980 that Oregon EFSC must determine that a licensed repository exists to handle high-level nuclear waste before a new nuclear power plant is permitted. SB 990 weakens this protection, opening the door to new high-level nuclear waste streams in Oregon without a permanent disposal site to receive them.

Residents of Oregon and Washington were reminded this week about the long-lasting, dangerous problems created by nuclear waste when a tunnel collapsed at the Hanford Nuclear Site. The U.S. Department of Energy directed over 3,000 workers to shelter in place. The emergency offers a stark reminder that our region, and the Columbia River in particular, already carries a significant nuclear waste burden – one that we should not compound with additional nuclear waste-generating power plants.

We urge the members of the Committee on Energy and Environment to reject SB 990, and leave Oregonians protections against nuclear waste-generating power plants in place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Serres". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" and last name "Serres" clearly distinguishable.

Dan Serres
Conservation Director
Columbia Riverkeeper