

# ENERGY VISION

for the Columbia River Basin



**Columbia River Inter-Tribal  
Fish Commission**



WE ARE ALL  
SALMON PEOPLE.







## PREFACE

**T**he **Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)** was created by the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Yakama tribes in 1977. CRITFC provides technical, policy coordination, and enforcement services to the four tribes. More than 40 years ago, CRITFC assisted its member tribes in developing the provisions for the Northwest Power Acts energy planning and fish and wildlife requirements. Since then, it has supported its member tribes' goals for improving the conditions of the Columbia Basin's anadromous fish populations.



Recent dramatic changes in Columbia Basin salmon populations and the West Coast energy planning environment prompted CRITFC to undertake this second major revision of its energy-related recommendations intended to protect the tribes' treaty-secured fish, wildlife, cultural and other resources. I would like to express my appreciation to the Commission, which remained engaged with staff in development of this Vision document.

CRITFC received comments from more than thirty reviewers on the draft it released June 30, 2021. Commenters made many helpful suggestions for the final, including requests for:

- Recognition of broad tribal support for restoring healthy and harvestable salmon populations;
- Expanded energy efficiency for the region;
- Additional detail on future hydro configurations and operations;
- Analysis of Snake River dam breaching;
- Siting transmission and renewable resources; and
- Modernizing the Columbia River Treaty.

Looking forward, we appreciate the engagement of other sovereigns in the region and their desire to collaborate in the implementation of many recommendations contained in the 2022 Energy Vision. Making the recommendations in this Energy Vision a reality will take collaboration and hard work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aja K. DeCoteau".

**Aja K. DeCoteau**  
Executive Director



“We people of the Yakama, Warm Springs, Nez Perce, and Umatilla tribes flourished here in the Columbia River Basin for thousands of years. Our religion, culture, and livelihood depended upon the return of the salmon. With the westward expansion of the United States, our fish began to diminish. Despite this, we have never given up. We continue to work and pray for their abundant return.”





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# The Pacific Northwest Is Facing Four Critical Issues.



Many Columbia Basin **salmon and steelhead populations are near extinction.**

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**The climate crisis is already underway;** without strong action, it will further reduce the survival of salmon and steelhead and damage every part of the region's economy and environment.

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**Renewable resources will play a larger role** in meeting future electricity needs in the region. Under the right conditions they can reduce greenhouse gases and benefit salmon.

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Without proper integration and siting, **renewable resources can make things worse for Columbia River salmon** and other tribal resources.

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A major theme of this Energy Vision is to ensure that renewable resources in combination with increased storage, reductions in peak demand, and increased energy efficiency can provide clean, adequate, reliable, and affordable electricity, support the restoration of healthy, harvestable salmon populations, and prevent future damage to salmon and steelhead and other tribal resources caused by the electrical system.



# Vision for Columbia River Resources and Energy

CRITFC and its member tribes envision a future where the Columbia Basin electric power system supports healthy and harvestable fish and wildlife populations, protects tribal treaty and cultural resources, and provides clean, reliable, and affordable electricity.

The goals for this Energy Vision are:

- **Create a regional energy portfolio** that protects and enhances environmental quality, treaty protected resources, and supports the restoration of Columbia Basin's fish and wildlife to healthy and harvestable population levels.
- **Prevent new and reduce ongoing damage** to Columbia River Basin resources, including fish, wildlife, water quality, and tribal cultural resources, by recognizing the relationships and interdependencies of natural and built systems including the Northwest's energy system.
- **Provide increased protection** for both fish and wildlife and utility customers against unanticipated events, such as drought, fire, and market aberrations while providing an adequate, economical, and reliable electric supply.
- **Mitigate climate change impacts** to protect Northwest ecosystems by replacing fossil-fuel electric generation and reducing the reliance on fossil-fuels for power, transportation, and other uses.

The Yakama, Nez Perce, Umatilla, and Warm Springs tribes founded CRITFC in 1977 to protect their treaty rights to take salmon and other resources. In 1855, each of the four tribes entered a separate treaty with the United States which ceded title to vast amounts of land in the interior Columbia Basin while reserving rights to take fish and gather First Foods.

In May 2021, a coalition of 57 tribes from the Pacific Northwest adopted a resolution calling on Congress and the President to *“Invest in Salmon and River Restoration in the Pacific Northwest, Charting a Stronger, Better Future for the Northwest, And Bringing Long-Ignored Tribal Justice To Our Peoples And Homelands.”* Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, Resolution #2021–23 adopted at the 2021 Mid-Year Convention. Recognizing that the fate of the tribes and Northwest salmon are intertwined, the resolution called for implementing bold energy and salmon actions including “restoring the lower Snake River by breaching the four lower Snake River dams.” The resolution also recognizes that “offering a solution that invests in a stronger, better Northwest that goes beyond salmon, ensuring that communities impacted by river restoration are made whole—and in doing so offering additional opportunities for tribes within other sectors—from infrastructure and technology development to energy production.” A substantially similar resolution was adopted by the National Congress of American Indians in June 2021. NCAI is the oldest and largest national organization representing American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments.





“The salmon was put here by the Creator for our use as part of the cycle of life. It gave to us, and we, in turn, gave back to it through our ceremonies.”

— Carla HighEagle, Nez Perce elder



# Highlights of the 2022 Energy Vision Recommendations

The 2022 Energy Vision details CRITFC’s recommendations to meet the four goals on page 4. The recommendations call for actions by Bonneville Power Administration, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, the Federal Action Agencies for the Columbia River System, state utility commissions, and utilities. A list of the 43 Energy Vision recommendations can be found on the following pages. Highlights of the recommendations include:







### **Improve River Configuration and Operations**

The region needs to plan for changes to reduce the damage to migrating salmon and steelhead caused by the Columbia Basin dams, including breaching the four lower Snake River dams.



### **Amend the Columbia River Treaty**

Amend the treaty to include protections for fish and wildlife and expand the scope to include win-win opportunities to integrate renewable resources.



### **Reduce Peak Loads**

Reduce peak demands to save both salmon and money.



### **Maximize Energy Efficiency**

Maintain and expand energy efficiency targets and work to exceed them. Energy efficiency measures are positive for fish and wildlife.



### **Harness Renewable Resources**

Renewable resources in combination with storage and electric load management can create an environment that is better for fish and wildlife and other tribal resources.



### **Strategically Site Renewable Resources**

Develop a regional plan for where renewable resources should be developed and where they should not, and to provide expeditious siting with clear and uniform standards across all political subdivisions.



### **Increase Resource Adequacy**

Prevent electricity shortages, which can reduce protection and funding for fish and wildlife.



### **Minimize Transmission and Distribution Systems**

Load management, energy efficiency, and strategic siting of resources will reduce costs for consumers and the damage to tribal resources.



### **Address the Climate Crisis**

Reduce greenhouse gas pollution and continue to increase energy efficiency to try to avoid the devastating effects we are facing.



# 2022 Energy Vision Full Recommendations

Following are the 43 recommendations CRITFC has identified in this Energy Vision to help achieve our vision of a Columbia Basin electric power system that supports abundant and sustainable fish and wildlife populations, protects tribal treaty and cultural resources, and provides clean, reliable, and affordable electricity. CRITFC will monitor the implementation of these recommendations and prepare a report in five years to evaluate whether and how the recommendations have been implemented.



## River Restoration and Improved Dam Configurations and Operations

**Recommendation 1:** The region should prepare to implement river restoration, dam configurations, and river operations that are compatible with, and support, healthy and harvestable fish populations. These recommendations include breaching the four lower Snake River dams, spill operations at run-of-river dams, flow related operations at storage dams, structural modifications to aid salmon and lamprey passage, needed maintenance, flood control studies, actions to improve water temperatures, and capability for lower Snake River dam breaching.



## Amend the Columbia River Treaty

**Recommendation 2:** The United States and Canada should include direct participation of the 15 tribal sovereigns in the U.S. portion of the Columbia Basin in negotiations to modernize the Columbia River Treaty in ways that restore and maintain ecosystem functions compatible with healthy and harvestable treaty-protected resources. The parties should integrate other energy resources into the treaty negotiations that have the potential to reduce carbon emissions and improve renewable resource integration while protecting fish impacted by the energy systems of the two countries

**Recommendation 3:** The Corps of Engineers should conduct a comprehensive study of flood risk in the Columbia Basin and the need to make regional decisions on balancing flood risk with multiple purposes of the system, including ecosystem function and effects on fish and wildlife.





## Reduce Peak Loads

**Recommendation 4:** The Council, BPA, and utilities should include the peak savings and reductions in transmission and distribution benefits in calculating the capacity value of energy efficiency programs.

**Recommendation 5:** Northwest public utility commissions should implement time-of-use rates to send an appropriate price signal that captures the dramatically different costs of using electricity during different times of the day.

**Recommendation 6:** Utilities should use demand response to manage system loads, reducing peak loads, ensuring reliability by encouraging customers to reduce demand during peak periods, or shift loads from peak to off-peak hours.

**Recommendation 7:** Automobile manufacturers should include systems that allow electric vehicles to schedule charging during off-peak periods.

**Recommendation 8:** Utilities should integrate electric vehicle charging and batteries into the power system to reduce costs to consumers and the power system and improve salmon migration.

**Recommendation 9:** BPA and utilities should work to improve the efficiency of electric vehicles.

**Recommendation 10:** The Council, BPA, and utilities should fund the incremental costs of heat pump water heaters to stimulate the adoption of this technology.

**Recommendation 11:** Utilities and BPA should develop and fund programs to schedule when water heaters operate.



## Increase Electricity Storage

**Recommendation 12:** BPA and utilities should implement utility-scale battery projects.

**Recommendation 13:** BPA and utilities should implement incentive programs to expand the use of on-site batteries.

**Recommendation 14:** BPA and utilities should fund programs to reduce peak loads using the thermal mass of buildings.

**Recommendation 15:** The Council and utilities should not pursue potential pumped storage sites unless they are consistent with the siting criteria.

**Recommendation 16:** Utilities and the Council should continue to monitor green hydrogen technologies.



## Maximize Energy Efficiency

**Recommendation 17:** The Council should increase the conservation targets in the 8th Power Plan to maintain at least the level of activity called for in the 7th Plan and work with BPA and utilities to try to exceed the targets.

**Recommendation 18:** The Council should monitor the implementation of energy efficiency programs to ensure that utilities meet the conservation targets.



**Recommendation 19:** All tribal homes and businesses should be fully weatherized by 2025 and all tribal homes and businesses should receive solar panels and battery systems that provide zero net energy by 2030.

**Recommendation 20:** Utilities should weatherize and achieve net zero energy for all low-income homes by 2035.

**Recommendation 21:** Utilities, the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, and other organizations should implement comprehensive programs to improve energy management practices in the commercial and industrial sectors.



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## Harness Renewable Resources and Integrate/Synergize with Electricity Storage

**Recommendation 22:** Congress, state legislatures, the Council, and public utility commissions should review programs to reduce greenhouse gases to avoid unintended consequences.

**Recommendation 23:** The Council should analyze the integration of renewable resources under a range of scenarios for river operations.

**Recommendation 24:** Utilities and BPA should continue to pursue wind development, and the associated efforts to integrate wind power, consistent with the tribal concerns and protections for fish, wildlife, and cultural resources.

**Recommendation 25:** The region should expand its efforts to promote utility-scale solar energy.

**Recommendation 26:** BPA and utilities should fund proof of concept projects for dual use solar.

**Recommendation 27:** States, local governments, and utilities should expand policies to promote on-site solar systems.

**Recommendation 28:** The Council, Northwest legislatures, energy regulators, and utilities should consider adopting zero net energy building standards.

**Recommendation 29:** State and local governments should adjust building codes to ensure that they can accommodate on-site batteries.

**Recommendation 30:** The Council, BPA, and utilities should continue to monitor and support other promising renewable resources.



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## Strategically Site Renewable Resources

**Recommendation 31:** CRITFC and its member tribes should work with state energy and siting agencies, federal agencies, Northwest Grid, the Northwest Power Pool, and others to develop a comprehensive plan for siting renewable resources and transmission lines that builds on efforts currently being developed in the states.





## Increase Resource Adequacy

**Recommendation 32:** The Northwest Power Pool Resource Adequacy Program should address fish and wildlife protections.

**Recommendation 33:** The California Public Utilities Commission and the California Independent System Operator should address reliability issues in California that could affect the Northwest.

**Recommendation 34:** BPA and Congress should address repayments to the Treasury to avoid curtailment of fish and wildlife protections.

**Recommendation 35:** The Pacific Northwest utilities, states, and federal agencies should closely monitor West Coast energy market developments to ensure that they address impacts on Columbia Basin fish and wildlife and other tribal resources.

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## Minimize Transmission and Distribution Systems

**Recommendation 36:** BPA and utilities should invest in solutions that minimize transmission and distribution expansions.

**Recommendation 37:** BPA, utilities, and public utility commissions should develop a transparent system to report transmission and distribution costs.

**Recommendation 38:** BPA and utilities should address transmission reliability.

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## Address the Climate Crisis

**Recommendation 39:** Federal, state, and local policy makers should develop programs to reduce the use of fossil fuels.

**Recommendation 40:** Federal and state governments should end all subsidies for fossil fuels.

**Recommendation 41:** Utilities, tribes, farming, and non-governmental organizations should implement pilot projects to sequester carbon dioxide.

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## Additional Considerations

**Recommendation 42:** Northwest utilities should not consider new nuclear power missions at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation without tribal consultation and consent. Evaluation of other sites for nuclear fission should consider the costs and compatibility with intermittent renewable resources and salmon protections.

**Recommendation 43:** Utilities and Public Utility Commissions should adopt policy to deny service for cryptocurrency mining in the Northwest.



## NEXT STEPS

# Call for Action

**The Northwest is at a critical crossroads, facing challenges to the health of the planet and the future of iconic fish and wildlife.**

These challenges are especially important to tribal resources that have sustained tribal people since time immemorial.



One path leads to affordable, carbon-free energy that harmonizes with the ecosystem. This future would prioritize energy efficiency, renewable resources, new storage technologies, reductions in peak loads, and other strategies that are compatible with the needs of fish and wildlife. These efforts would reduce the impacts of renewable resource projects and transmission lines on tribal resources and save consumers money.

The other path creates conflicts between renewable resources and tribal resources and results in higher costs for consumers.

Choosing the first path will require the courage to act, common-ground solutions, and a commitment of resources to accomplish the hard work ahead. It will also require the humility to periodically evaluate and adjust course based on new information and understanding.

CRITFC and its member tribes are committed to working with other regional interests to lead the region to a brighter and healthier future. Affordable and reliable power is important to regional families and businesses, tribal and non-tribal. The true wealth of our region begins with the health of our rivers, fish, and the ecosystem they support, which is our culture, history, and future.

View the complete 2022 Energy Vision at [www.critfc.org/energy-vision](http://www.critfc.org/energy-vision)



“All First Foods, all life, depends on water... Our relationship to salmon and the First Foods is a reciprocal one. The First Foods nourish the Native people, while the Native people must protect them and the habitats that support them.”







**Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)**  
700 NE Multnomah St., Suite 1200 • Portland, Oregon 97232 • [www.critfc.org](http://www.critfc.org)  
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