

The SHOSHONE-BANNOCK TRIBES

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**STATEMENT OF NATHAN SMALL,
FORT HALL BUSINESS COUNCIL MEMBER
TO THE IDAHO SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
IN OPPOSITION TO SJM 103**

March 8, 2021

Good afternoon members of the Senate Resource and Environment Committee,

My name is Nathan Small, and I serve on the Fort Hall Business Council, the governing body for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. I appreciate the opportunity to offer the official tribal position on the SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL NO. 103 (SJM-103) being considered at this time. While the Tribes recognize the management of Snake River basin resources is a complex topic, we fundamentally disagree with the approach suggested by SJM-103. Each legislative session offers Idaho a chance to envision sound public policy that will improve the delivery of services across our State and to develop comprehensive solutions to promote a transition into an uncertain future; unfortunately, SJM-103 achieves neither of these goals. The Tribes recommend engaging directly with Congressman Mike Simpson, Idaho's 2nd District Representative, on his proposal to develop legislation that transitions the Northwest to a more sustainable future;

rather than focus on preserving an antiquated, unsustainable piece of energy infrastructure located in Washington and Oregon.

Idaho is in a unique position to objectively assess the changes in our economy, population growth, agriculture, energy infrastructure, as well as our fish and wildlife resources. The intent of developing the current hydrosystem was to provide for the needs of the region at the time many of these facilities were constructed; in the intervening decades, those needs have changed dramatically. The hydroelectric facilities in the Columbia River basin are not permanent fixtures on the landscape, and each facility has an operational life based on its specific function. The Tribes recognize that Idaho does have significant interest in the Lower Four Snake River dams, those facilities are located in Washington and Oregon; with the Governor of Oregon openly supporting their removal. In short, Idaho will need to be an active participant in conversations about our energy future or those decisions will be made in our absence.

Unfortunately, SJM-103 presents the concept of modifying the hydrosystem infrastructure located on the Snake River as inherently negative for Idaho; this approach is disingenuous and counter-productive to achieving a more reliable system for end users of the Snake River. Each issue identified in SJM-103 can be addressed collaboratively and improve the delivery of services to every resident in our State. Energy can be replaced and located near population centers that are experiencing significant growth and will actually benefit citizens of Idaho for decades to come. Water resources are currently being sent down the river to mitigate for effects from the Columbia River system, it seems like that water would be put to better use in the Upper Snake from the Tribes' perspective. Recreation experiences can be enhanced on the Snake River through restoration actions similar to the numerous wild and scenic river reaches that might Idaho iconic. Transportation issues can be resolved with a system that provides Idaho's

exports reliable access to global markets. Salmon recovery recommendations to restore the Snake River are not outdated but rather, are based on the best available science. Removing these structures gives Idaho salmon their best chance to avoid extinction within our lifetimes.

SJM-103 offers an approach making our past infrastructure a permanent fixture, precluding the opportunity to address the needs our State will face in coming years. If this past year has confirmed anything, it is that change is inevitable. Congressman Simpson, our esteemed representative from Southeast Idaho, has proposed that we begin to have that conversation about transitioning our reliance on an antiquated system to one that is truly sustainable. SJM-103 does not protect Idaho's interests, it does not allow for our voice to be heard as legislation is developed in Washington DC, and it does not provide an avenue for Idaho to guide our own destiny based on the needs of our communities. In conclusion, the Tribes encourage every member of the Idaho legislature to put aside the current SJM-103 in favor of actively engaging in discussions with our delegation to comprehensively resolve issues surrounding the Lower Four Snake River dams in Washington and Oregon.

Thank you, and I am available to stand for any questions.