



For Immediate Release – January 23, 2026

Yakama Nation Condemns Pump Storage License Decision

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Issues a License for the Goldendale Pump Storage Project in Major Setback for Protection of Sacred Sites and Treaty Resources

Toppenish, Wash. – Today, Trump-appointed FERC Commissioners in Washington, D.C., praised foreign and developer-based interests in the largest and most expensive pumped storage project proposal in Washington State. The so-called the Goldendale Pump Storage proposal would be located adjacent to the Columbia River and the John Day Dam at a polluted aluminum smelter site. The proposed project's water storage reservoirs target the destruction of sacred sites that have great significance to food and medicinal gathering practices. Project developers have benefited from Trump-era rollbacks of federal clean water act protections and pulling-out of discussions with the state Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation on destructive impacts to traditional cultural properties.

“Today, federal agencies are rewarding bad actors who have spent years finding loop-holes to target a new wave of industrial development on top of indigenous sites that have religious and legendary significance to the Yakama People and many others who don’t have political connections or deep pockets” said the Yakama Tribal Council Chairman Gerald Lewis. He continued, “Elected Yakama leadership have met with tribal leaders in Oregon who face similar challenges – regulators in D.C. that do not hold private developers accountable to the laws that are meant to protect the environment, our foods, or important historical sites, and instead issue incomplete licenses with only an afterthought of losses and destruction to Yakama resources.”

Yakama Nation and aligned environmental non-profits have submitted written comments to state and federal agencies for years to advocate for the higher environmental consideration along the Columbia River. Two Environmental Impact Statements have found that the proposed project will lead to detrimental resource impacts. Corporate investors have contracted with local municipalities and unions to pay for some development impacts, but continue to ignore and downplay the harm identified by Yakama Nation. “They know it’s wrong, if a small Christian shrine sat on this site the decision-makers would understand what ‘sacred’ means. During his last days in office, Governor Inslee encouraged FERC to consider damage costs of \$25 million but developers rejected all specific commitments and hope to keep building the energy grid on still more sacrifices to the Yakama way of life” stated Chairman Lewis.

Information about project impacts are available at: <https://yakamafish-nsn.gov/goldendalewaterpumpproject> .

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Contact: Star Diavolikis, Public Information Officer, Star_Diavolikis@Yakama.com