

# JOINT AGENCY RECORDS OF DECISION: COLUMBIA RIVER SYSTEM OPERATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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Date: 18 March 2021

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# Briefing Agenda

- System Overview
- EIS Purpose & Scope
- Organization
- Factors to consider
- ROD structure & development
- ROD template
- Lessons learned & Tips



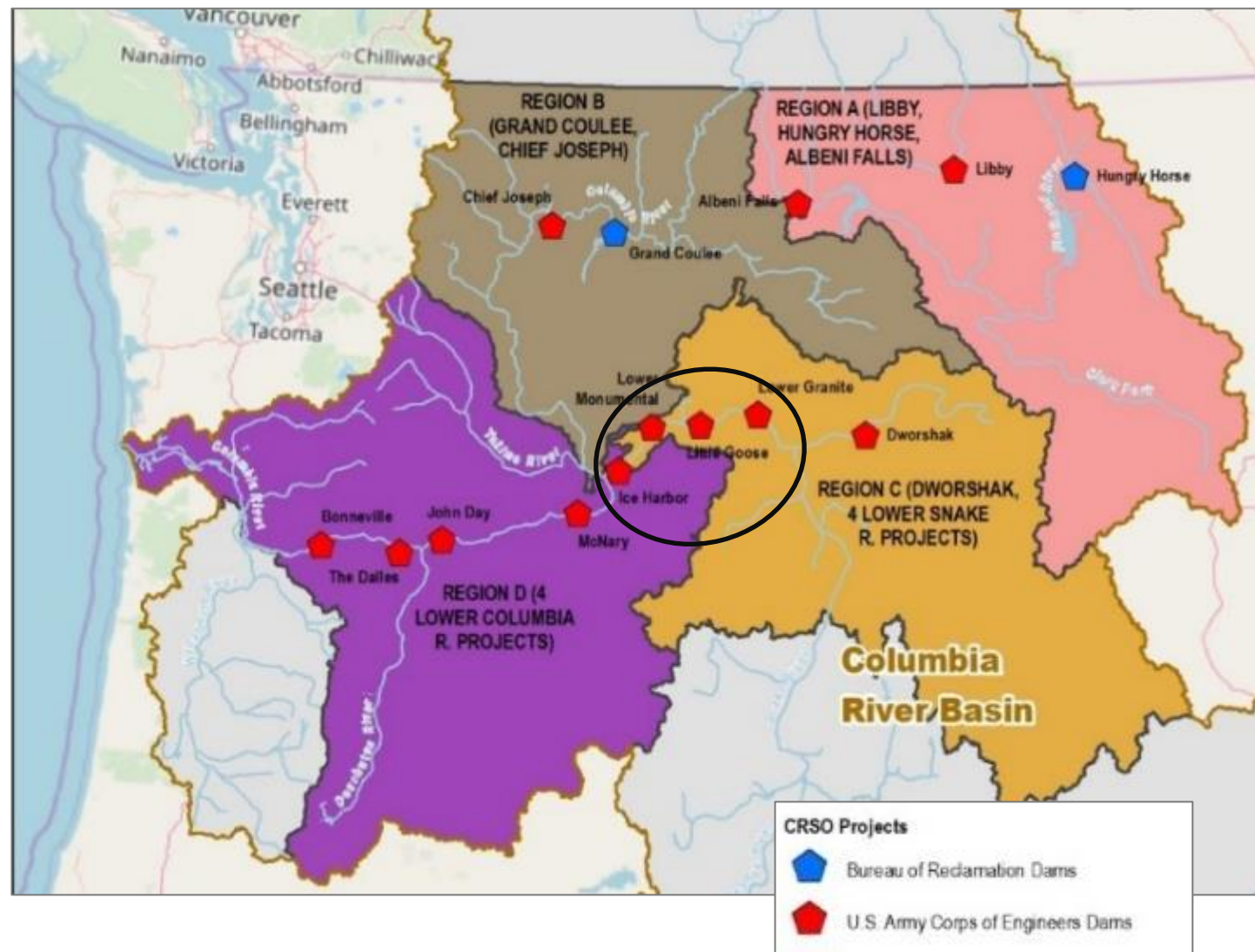


# System Overview



## EIS Scope

- 14 federal dam and reservoir projects - Federal Columbia River System
- Columbia River within the U.S., lower Snake River, select tributaries
- Three Co-Lead Agencies
- 30+ Cooperating Agencies, including tribes, states, and federal agencies





# WHAT IS THE COLUMBIA RIVER SYSTEM?

- Ongoing operation, maintenance, and configuration of the system of 14 federal dam and reservoir projects in Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington
- Congress authorized the Corps and Reclamation to construct, operate and maintain the system's projects to meet multiple specified purposes, including
  - Flood risk management
  - Navigation
  - Hydropower production
  - Irrigation
  - Fish and wildlife conservation
  - Recreation
  - Municipal & industrial water supply
  - Water quality
- Congress authorized BPA to market and transmit the power generated by these coordinated System operations.



# EIS PURPOSE & SCOPE

- To evaluate the effects of alternative approaches to meeting the 3 agencies' authorized purposes at 14 federal projects while minimizing or eliminating detrimental impacts on environmental, social, and economic resources *and* meeting all other federal statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Address impacts to the resources in light of potential climate change impacts.
- Update the status of compliance with other statutory and regulatory requirements where appropriate.



# CRSO EIS ORGANIZATION

- USACE, BoR & BPA were co-leads in preparing the CRSO EIS.
- Subteams along technical disciplines pull together the tools and assessments for the EIS. For the Corps, this includes staff from multiple districts and NWD participating with the other agencies.
- Robust involvement from 30 Cooperating Agencies, included as team members
- Decisions are made at the Regional Executive level for the 3 Action Agencies.
- Feedback through Independent External Peer Review Panel

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RECLAMATION



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# FACTORS WORTH MENTIONING

- History/legal challenges
- Schedule
- Public engagement/  
misconceptions
- Multiple purposes, with public  
priorities differing
- Cooperating agencies
- Economic considerations
- Covid-19



Petroglyph, Columbia River Gorge



# SCHEDULE DEIS TO ROD

- ❖ Draft EIS was released in February 2020
  - 45-day public comment period
  - held 6 virtual meetings
  - Received 59,000 submittals, including 55,000 form letters
- ❖ Final EIS released in July 2020
- ❖ Record of Decision signed in September 2020.
- ❖ Implementation of many operational components started in October 2020
- Coordinated efforts for integration of ESA Consultation:
- CRSO Biological Assessment
  - Co-leads provided to NMFS and USFWS Jan. 2020
- Draft Biological Opinions received May 2020
- Final Biological Opinions received July 2020
  - Added overshoot operations
  - No jeopardy/no adverse modification conclusion



# ROD & ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

❖ Record of Decision identifies the “Preferred Alternative” as the Selected Alternative.

It includes:

- summary of the rationale for the decision
- compliance with other environmental laws and regulations
- key considerations, including the opinions of other agencies, tribes, and the public
- identification of the “Environmentally Preferable alternative
- commitments to implement mitigation and ESA-related measures

❖ It is unique in Joint structure

❖ It includes language on updates to NEPA document



# ROD TEMPLATE

## **Section 1. Introduction and Decisions Summary**

## **Section 2. Background**

- P&N,
- Objectives
- Recent Litigation History\*
- Statutory Background\*
- Alternatives Considered
- Identification of preferred and environmentally preferable alternative
- Summary of potential effects
- Mitigation Measures

## **Section 3 Key Considerations\* (Next Slide)**

## **Section 4 Public Review**

## **Section 5 Environmental Compliance Summary**

## **Section 6 Final Agency Findings \* (3 separate findings/Decisions)**

## **List of Attachments**

*\* Unique to this joint ROD*



# ROD TEMPLATE

## Section 3 - Key Considerations for the Decision

- Responding to the court and court order
- ESA-listed species
- Lamprey
- Tribal viewpoints
- Cultural resources
- Tribal treaty rights
- Indian trust Assets
- Water quality
- Power reliability
- Green house gas emissions
- Climate change
- Scientific integrity
- Comparable benefits of the Alternatives.



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# DISCUSSION

- ❖ Lessons learned
- ❖ Agency observations
- ❖ Tips



McNary Spillway  
and Turbine



QUESTIONS?



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