

House Natural Resource Committee

Defend Our Dams Act (H.R. 2073)

3 September 2025

Highlights:

The Defend Our Dams Act ([H.R. 2073](#)) would block federal funding for studies or removal of dams on the Lower Snake River.

Witness:

- [Clark Mather](#)- Northwest River Partners
- [Chairman Shannon Wheeler](#)- Nez Perce Tribe

Summary:

The Defend Our Dams Act ([H.R. 2073](#)) is sponsored by [Representative Dan Newhouse](#) (R-WA) and prohibits federal funds from being used to study, plan, or execute the breach or functional alteration of the four dams on the Lower Snake River. The dams are part of the Federal Columbia River Power System.

Discussion

[Representative Rob Wittman](#) (R-VA) argued that the dams provide critical hydropower, support regional trade, irrigation and flood control. Rep. Whittman also stated the dams are essential for energy reliability and should not be removed or studied for removal without explicit congressional authorization.

Clark Mather of the [Northwest River Partners](#) testified that the dams are vital for affordable, clean energy and agriculture. He cited University of Washington data that found salmon returns have improved since the dams were built.

[Representative Val Hoyle](#) (D-OR) argued that the bill bans scientific study, and noted that salmon populations are in crisis, with some species nearing extinction. Rep. Hoyle said that the bill undermines Tribal treaty rights and ecosystem restoration efforts.

Tribal Chairman Shannon Wheeler of the [Nez Perce Tribe](#) testified that salmon are central to the Nez Perce culture, health, and economy and that the dams are the primary source of salmon mortality. He also said that the bill violated the Tribe's 1855 treaty rights to fish in usual and accustomed places. He urged collaborative solutions and continued research into dam impacts.