



# Northwest Resource Information Center

Box 427, Eagle, Idaho 83616 USA ■ VOICE & FAX 208.939.0714 ■ [edchaney@nwrlic.org](mailto:edchaney@nwrlic.org)

March 4, 2013

Dr. Steven Chu  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20585

[The.Secretary@hq.doe.gov](mailto:The.Secretary@hq.doe.gov)

Secretary Chu:

Attached is a petition NRIC submitted to the DOE Inspector General. It requests an investigation of the scofflaw culture that has metastasized in Bonneville Power Administration's upper management. NRIC alleges that this scofflaw culture has wasted and otherwise improperly used billions of dollars in federal funds. That it is responsible for ecological, economic and social damage of epic proportions.

NRIC is aware, of course, that you are on your way out as DOE Secretary. However, you have four years of experience dealing with Bonneville. Your insight will be invaluable to the Inspector General and to your successor. Anything you can do to alert the Obama Administration to this situation will do a great service to the Northwest region and the Nation.

NRIC believes that if President Obama were made aware of what his employees in the scofflaw upper management of Bonneville Power Administration are doing in the name of his administration, he would not tolerate it. He would stop the profligate waste of federal funds, and end the egregious betrayal of the public trust and the attendant ecological, economic and social damage.

A succession of Administrators and upper management personnel at Bonneville for decades have zealously subverted multiple laws and policies designed to protect salmon produced in the vast pristine habitats of the Snake River Basin. Consequently, the salmon populations and dependent economies were decimated.

In 1980 Congress responded with sweeping salmon restoration provisions in what is commonly called the Northwest Power Act. The Act vested Bonneville with the independent duty to make changes in the Federal Columbia River Power System as necessary to restore Snake River salmon. Bonneville's upper management not only refused that duty for the past 30 years, it conspired with economic interests to drive the salmon onto the List of Endangered Species.

During the G.W. Bush Administration, Bonneville's upper management engineered what may well be the most costly and destructive government-funded scientific hoax in U.S. History—a scientifically, legally and ethically corrupt Biological Opinion produced under the aegis of NOAA Fisheries. It has been serially rejected by the federal courts. The 2004 version was characterized by the court as “a cynical and transparent attempt to avoid responsibility for the decline of listed Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead.”

Bonneville upper management orchestrated the collaborative effort that deceived the incoming Obama Administration into adopting the ESA policies of the outgoing G.W. Bush Administration. Armed with the policy cover it sought, Bonneville upper management was then free to pursue its scofflaw obsession with protecting the salmon-killing status quo of the FCRPS, without regard to the cost to society now and in the future.

It is incontrovertible that Bonneville upper management for decades has exhibited systematic contempt for the rule of law and the public interest. It has blatantly used federal funds for political purposes; to aggressively suppress science not to its liking; to collaborate with pork barrel economic interests to deliberately mislead federal, state and tribal elected officials, the news media and general public; to provide cover for scofflaw behavior that deliberately wastes hundreds of millions of federal dollars on salmon enhancement projects that cannot possibly fulfill requirements of law; to defy a federal court order designed to protect threatened and endangered Snake River salmon; to attempt to influence the federal court by using \$1 billion in federal funds to bribe economically stressed Native American Indian tribes to drop their opposition to and support the illegal Biological Opinion serially rejected by the court, and to give up their sovereign right to challenge Bonneville's actions under other laws including the Clean Water Act and Northwest Power Act.

It has been more than 30 years since passage of the Northwest Power Act. Its salmon restoration provisions were driven by the "urgent priority" to reverse the devastating effect of the Federal Columbia River Power System on Snake River salmon and dependent economies.

Bonneville claims to have spent billions of public dollars on salmon restoration. The result: the plight of Snake River salmon has degenerated from serious to critical; many hundreds of millions of dollars in direct damage; untold billions in cost of opportunity foregone; the region's ratepayers and nation's taxpayers at risk of draconian intervention by the federal courts.

Bill Drummond recently was appointed to succeed outgoing Administrator Steve Wright. Drummond is an alumnus of Bonneville as Deputy Administrator and of the Public Power Council as its head. The Council for decades has closely collaborated with Bonneville upper management to subvert the Northwest Power Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Bonneville upper management's scofflaw culture has metastasized. It cannot be changed from the inside; change must be imposed on it from the outside. An Inspector General investigation would clearly reveal the systemic nature and severity of the problem and inform the changes necessary to impose on Bonneville respect for the rule of law and the public trust.

It is NRIC's hope that in your final days of service you will make others in the Obama Administration aware of the compelling need for the requested investigation. Thank you for your years of service.

Sincerely,



Ed Chaney  
Director

Attachments:

March 4, 2013 letter to DOE Inspector General

*Request for U.S. Department of Energy Inspector General Investigation of Waste of Federal Funds and Violations of Other Federal Laws by Scofflaw Culture in Upper Management of Bonneville Power Administration, March 4, 2013.*