

Columbia River

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3 **WHEREAS**, the mighty Columbia River is an international resource and its tributaries
4 sustain life in this region by providing water for hydropower generation, agricultural
5 irrigation, municipal and industrial water supplies, navigation, recreation, and
6 anadromous fisheries; and

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8 **WHEREAS**, the Columbia River is of cultural and religious significance to the native
9 peoples who lived along its banks and fished its waters prior to the arrival of European
10 settlers; and

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12 **WHEREAS**, the Columbia River system is the 4th largest watershed in the U.S., with 17
13 million tons of annual cargo; and

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15 **WHEREAS**, hydropower, our nation's largest renewable resource, accounts for over
16 90% of all electricity that comes from renewable resources (e.g, solar, geothermal, wind,
17 biomass), hydropower is generated at only 3% of the nations's 80,000 dams; and

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19 **WHEREAS**, hydropower accounts for 10% of our nation's power, but 80% of the
20 electricity produced in the Northwest is from hydropower, enough to power 13.6
21 million homes at a very low cost and without the environmental hazards caused by
22 other methods of electricity generation; and

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24 **WHEREAS**, consumers in Chelan, Douglas, and Grant County enjoy the lowest
25 electricity rates in the nation, and this clean, inexpensive and renewable energy source
26 is a substantial boon to the quality of life and economy of this region, now and for
27 future generations; and

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29 **WHEREAS**, Governor Christine Gregoire stated in October 2005, "Agriculture is one of
30 the main economic engines of our state and water is the lifeblood of central
31 Washington's agricultural community"; and

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33 **WHEREAS**, the Columbia Basin region produces 119 different crops, one third of all
34 wheat exports, and Grant, Franklin and Adams counties are the first, second, and fifth
35 largest potato producing counties in the U.S.; and

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37 **WHEREAS**, the Waluke Slope near Mattawa was recently named a prime wine grape
38 growing region because its soil and climate produce some of the world's best red wine
39 grapes; and

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41 **WHEREAS**, 2 years ago, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation rescinded a 1993 moratorium
42 placed by the bureau and the state Department of Ecology on any additional water
43 withdrawals from the Columbia River; and

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45 **WHEREAS**, the Columbia River Treaty with Canada will expire in 2024, and, due to
46 many competing interests regarding the river, the Columbia River Task Force is
47 working to find solutions that are acceptable to the public, the Bonneville Power
48 Administration, the U.S. Corps of Engineers and Canada; and

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50 **WHEREAS**, over 37% of American rivers are not safe for swimming, fishing, or other
51 beneficial uses and the Spokane River, which flows into the Columbia at Roosevelt
52 Lake, has been declared the 7th most polluted river in America; and

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54 **WHEREAS**, the heart of every healthy community is a healthy river; and

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56 **WHEREAS**, the Columbia River, which flows 1200 miles from its headwaters to the
57 Pacific Ocean, was once a clean river teeming with fish, but today, its polluted waters
58 violate federal standards for dioxins, heavy metals (including mercury, cadmium,
59 arsenic and lead), temperature and bacteria; and

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61 **WHEREAS**, the Columbia is contaminated with dangerous chemicals and radioactive
62 waste from the Hanford Nuclear Site and other industrial polluters; and

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64 **WHEREAS**, Columbia River native salmon are on the brink of extinction, and river fish
65 contamination levels threaten human health; and

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67 **WHEREAS**, powerful, politically-connected developers are currently attempting to
68 shrink the buffer zone (“riparian management zone”) along the Columbia River in
69 Douglas county from the 250 foot width recommended by the state to a mere 50 feet in
70 order to build golf courses and other development projects, which will have a
71 significantly negative impact on wildlife and public access for many generations to
72 come; and

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74 **WHEREAS**, 170,000 acres of prime potato growing Eastern Washington farm land is
75 currently threatened with losing its productivity due to the sharp decline of the Odessa
76 aquifer caused by deep well drilling which occurred because the U.S. Bureau of
77 Reclamation’s planned expansion of the Columbia Basin Project was never completed,
78 leaving that area without the necessary irrigation canals; and

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80 **WHEREAS**, although completing the Columbia Basin Project will be expensive,
81 possibly costing up to \$1 billion, it would reduce groundwater pumping dramatically,
82 allowing the aquifer to recharge over time, while reducing the flow of the Columbia
83 River less than 1%; and

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85 **WHEREAS**, global climate change will increase the probability of winter floods and
86 summer droughts in the Northwest, requiring significant water storage and
87 conservation efforts to prevent shortages; and

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89 **WHEREAS**, water shortage will require off stream reservoirs to catch surface runoff in
90 the winter and use this water for both in stream and out of stream uses and it will be
91 necessary to develop aquifer storage and recovery (known as ASR technology)
92 programs to recharge the basalt aquifers; and
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94 **WHEREAS**, the 2003 Washington legislature approved \$4 million to study the Black
95 Rock project, which would store Columbia River water in a natural “bathtub” between
96 the Columbia and the Yakima Valley, thus saving nearly 900,000 acre-feet of water that
97 is currently being pulled out of the Yakima River, as well as improving fish habitat and
98 providing for local municipal growth; and
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100 **WHEREAS**, the Washington State Legislature has approved a new Columbia River
101 management plan that intends to build new storage reservoirs while preserving water
102 for fish runs, and \$200 million has been set aside for storage projects in Eastern
103 Washington; and
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105 **WHEREAS**, a \$50,000 study is evaluating the viability of a new storage reservoir on
106 Campbell Creek near Peshastin; and in Eastern Washington; and
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108 **WHEREAS**, conservation of significant amount of irrigation water is possible through
109 the use of improved equipment and technology, thus helping to preserve our streams
110 and aquifers; and
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112 **WHEREAS**, 100 years ago, Congress declared that our national forests must be
113 managed to protect the source of water, as well as provide a steady flow of timber, but
114 vast stretches of burned forests have not been replanted, nor has adequate thinning
115 been done to prevent future fires; and
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117 **WHEREAS**, attempting to slow down global warming tied to carbon dioxide emissions
118 is essential if adequate mountain snow pack is to be maintained in this region; and
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120 **WHEREAS**, Washington state lawmakers should carefully study California’s 1300 page
121 report, which proposes 50 strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including a
122 proposal to create a market in which emission credits could be be traded between
123 sources, and imposing a surcharge on gasoline to help pay for research into clean fuels;
124 and
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126 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Washington State Democrats support
127 restoration and protection of the water quality of the Columbia River and all life
128 connected to it, from its headwaters to the Pacific Ocean; and
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130 **THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Washington State
131 Democrats support water storage measures which would allow farmers to continue

132 growing their crops, while simultaneously protecting fish runs and restoring our
133 aquifers; and

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135 **THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Washington State Democrats
136 support creative, "out of the box" thinking about ways to cope with our future water
137 supply issues caused by population growth and climate change.

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140 Submitted by 12th Legislatvie District Democrats to the Washington State Democratic
141 Party for consideration at its June 3, 2006 convention in Yakima (Date Submitted
142 05/30/2006).

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144 The Washington State Democratic Party at its State Convention on June 3, 2006 in
145 Yakima referred this resolution to the WSDCC Resolutions Committee for review at its
146 September 9 - 10, 2006 meeting in Ellensburg.

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148 The WSDCC Resolutions Committee recommended a "Pass" on this resolution at its
149 September 10, 2006 meeting in Ellensburg. The resolution will be forwarded to the
150 WSDCC at its next meeting on September 29 - 30, 2006 in Tacoma.

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152 The WSDCC passed this resolution at its September 30, 2006 meeting in Tacoma.