



## Alliance for a Livable and Sustainable Community

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3555 Strawberry Lane, Richland, WA 99352 [www.alsctc.org](http://www.alsctc.org)

March 9, 2020

The Honorable Dan Newhouse  
Member of Congress  
1414 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Newhouse:

We, the undersigned, wish to register our concern over your guest opinion which appeared in the Tri-City Herald on February 26, 2020.

There are three assertions in your opinion piece which we believe are at odds with the facts:

- 1) That reconveyance of up to 34 miles of Columbia river shoreline “has enjoyed strong, widespread support across our community.”

Comment: While TRIDEC, its commercial special interests allies, some property owners and some local governmental entities support reconveyance, it is equally true that our Native American Tribes, environmental groups and non-profit organizations and community residents do not support the TRIDEC initiative in the absence of a full and transparent vetting of a reconveyance proposal. Further public discussion of such a proposal or draft legislative language is needed before any community “buy-in” or claim of widespread community support is made.

- 2) That three public meetings were held in the Fall of 2018 which provided “open opportunities for local voices to be heard.”

Comment: These meetings were TRIDEC-hosted forums aimed at advancing the purpose of reconveyance. Speakers supportive of the TRIDEC reconveyance initiative were given preference over speakers who raised concerns or questioned reconveyance. Thus, these meetings were NOT an objective exercise in community engagement. A fourth and true public meeting, not mentioned by you, was the Columbia Basin Badger Club public event on November 15, 2018 which featured a debate and public comment on reconveyance. As can be attested by your local staff member who attended, there were several questions and concerns on reconveyance which cast doubt on the TRIDEC scheme. What is clear is that TRIDEC, as the chief architect and advocate for reconveyance, is ill-suited to chair or host any community forum on this matter. We need a truly objective party to conduct future public meetings if we are to have credible and “open opportunities for local voices to be heard.”

- 3) That “multiple meetings” have been held between reconveyance proponents and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and that “an official government-to-government meeting was held between the CTUIR Board of Trustees and elected officials of our three local cities, counties and ports.”

Comment: Your statement conveys the impression that the needed Tribal consultations have been completed and that, based on CTUIR input provided, you can now go forward with a legislative proposal. This is not the case. In fact, no definitive Tribal input has yet been provided. While there have been Tribal meetings with TRIDEC and local cities, the parties are no where close to any agreement on reconveyance of the Columbia river shoreline. In short, there is NO buy-in from CTUIR and questions and concerns remain outstanding. It is clearly premature to assert that you have now conducted the needed Tribal consultations to move forward with a legislative conveyance of the shoreline.

Additionally, you make no mention of the uncertain state of the U.S.-Canada negotiations on the Columbia Treaty and the impact these may have on any conveyance of land along the Columbia river. Without a bilateral resolution of important issues such as water flow management and flood risk mitigation, it would seem wise to await the outcome of the negotiations before transferring ownership of the shoreline to local governmental entities.

We respectfully request that you not proceed with any legislative proposal on shoreline reconveyance at this time. We ask that you support naming a neutral party to host future public meetings on reconveyance, that you await the provision of a definitive CTUIR position on this matter, that you postpone consideration of next steps until the Columbia River treaty negotiations conclude, and that you continue to call for a true community-wide discussion and vetting of any proposed legislative proposal.

Sincerely,

James A. Wise, Ph.D.  
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Alliance for a Livable and  
Sustainable Community

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