**Resolution to Support Lower Snake River Rail Development**

**WHEREAS** the Washington State Democratic Central Committee agrees with the urgent need to replace benefits currently provided by the Lower Snake River (LSR) dams, consistent with the Washington State Democratic Party 2022 Platform (1) and the Lower Snake River Dams Benefits Replacement Report from Governor Inslee and Senator Murray, including investments in alternative transportation infrastructure to protect farmers, and assist in recovery of salmon that are on the brink of extinction and essential to the culture and wellbeing of Tribal Nations (2)(3); and

**WHEREAS** competitive options are needed for shipping through investments in shortline rail infrastructure to enable interconnectivity between the mainline railroads and the short line network in the LSR area, to provide alternatives to shipping by barge and truck, resilience against climate events or supply chain events and other threats (4); and

**WHEREAS** threats to shipping by barge could include temporary or permanent interruption of barge service due to instances of lock failures, extended maintenance, spill/drawdown, dredging, treaty obligation, litigation or dam breaching or removal, and preparation for these potentialities are urgently needed, including contingency measures to protect farmers; and

**WHEREAS** an improved shortline rail shipping network in the region reduces roadway accidents, wear and tear on roads from trucking (5), toxic particulate runoff from truck tires (6), and emissions from trucks (7); and

**WHEREAS** the Washington State Transportation Budget for the 2023-2025 biennium funds studies of the potential for rail improvements in the region (8); however, the three-year period of performance is too long considering the urgency to protect and recover salmon species.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Environment and Climate Caucus of the Washington State Democratic Party (ECC) supports expanded and improved rail service in the LSR region, to provide shipping options to replace current transportation services of the Lower Snake River dams, and resilience for farmers against other risks, and to proactively support the survival and renewal of salmon species that are foundational to the culture and wellbeing of Tribal Nations; and

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the ECC ask the Washington State Legislature to authorize and appropriate funding for projects that can be implemented in the 2025-2027 biennium, including measures to protect farmers while the shortline network is being implemented, with timely applications made for all available federal grants, and a program completion deadline set for no later than Dec. 31, 2028,

**THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that copies of this resolution be sent to the Governor of the State of Washington, the Washington Democratic Congressional Delegation, the Washington State House and Senate Democrats, and Joint Transportation Executive Committee; and be submitted to the Washington State Democratic Central Committee for consideration at its January 2024 meeting.

**Submitted to the Washington LD 32 Democrats** for consideration at the 2024 January 3rd general membership meeting.

**Adopted Unanimously, Wednesday, January 3, 2024**

**Submitted by:** Lael White, member, LD 32, Environment and Climate Caucus (ECC) and Don Schwerin, Chair, Agricultural and Rural Caucus; for the ECC SE Washington Rail Committee; laelcwhite@gmail.com; 206-354-3616, and don.schwerin@gmail.com, 509-520 9424

**References**:

(1) Washington [State Democratic Party Platform (2022)](https://www.wa-democrats.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-Washington-State-Democrats-Platform-Passed-6-25-2022.pdf) Lines 694-698

(2) Gov. Jay Inslee and U.S. Senator Patty Murray of Washington State [Lower Snake River Dams: Benefit Replacement Report](https://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/LSRD%20Benefit%20Replacement%20Final%20Report_August%202022.pdf), Ch. 5

(3) <https://stateofsalmon.wa.gov/executive-summary/salmon-status/>

(4) [Threats and Uncertainties Regarding Future Barging of Grain on the Lower Snake River](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bB64pZGtBC3BsMiX34PVyHsUnCN76R-R/view?usp=drive_link), Linwood Laughy, Sept. 28, 2023

(5) Shipping by truck - roadway wear:

The Five Most Blatant Myths about Freight Transportation on the Lower Snake River (2013): <https://www.wildsalmon.org/images/factsheets-and-reports/2013-Five-Myths-lower-Snake-waterway.pdf>

(6) tire particulate: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maryroeloffs/2023/11/08/fishermen-sue-tire-manufacturers-over-toxic-chemicals-they-say-are-harming-salmon-and-trout/?sh=46791b9b1ca7>;

(7) reduced emissions: <https://www.aar.org/issue/freight-rail-climate-change/>

(8) Engrossed Substitute HB 1125 as passed by the Washington State Legislature, Transportation Budget 2023-2025 Session Law: 217 (11a) p. 60, and Section 204 (8) p.18: <https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Amendments/House/1125-S.E%20AMC%20CONF%20S3376.1.pdf>