



Associated Press File

An American flag flies near the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River in Washington state. Members of the U.S. House from Washington and Oregon have sent a letter to the Trump administration urging it to commence renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty with Canada.

# House members urge Trump to renegotiate Columbia River Treaty

Capital Press

Seven members of the U.S. House from Washington state and Oregon have sent a letter to the White House urging President Donald Trump to begin renegotiating the Columbia River Treaty as soon as possible.

The 1964 treaty obligates the U.S. to send hydropower to Canada, commonly known as the Canadian Entitlement, which is borne by 6.4 million Northwest electrical custom-

ers at a cost of \$250 million to \$350 million annually, the members of Congress wrote in their June 21 letter.

“Renegotiating the Columbia River Treaty has an enormous impact on jobs, hydropower, water storage, flood control and the environment in the Pacific Northwest,” Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., said. “It’s important to begin formal negotiations as soon as possible to address certain inequities such as the Canadian Entitlement as well as ensure we have

an updated and equitable treating for the 21st Century.”

Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore., said the treaty has fostered important cooperation for more than 50 years but the update is long overdue.

The letter urges Trump to use a “Notice of Termination of the Power Provisions” if necessary to prompt Canada into negotiations.

Some estimates show Canada receives almost 10 times the benefits the U.S. Pacific Northwest receives from coor-

dated system operations, the representatives wrote.

Certain provisions related to flood control automatically expire in 2024 while most portions, including the Canadian Entitlement, continue indefinitely without action, they wrote.

Others signing the letter were Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash.; Peter DeFazio, D-Ore.; Greg Walden, R-Ore.; Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-Wash.; and Dave Reichert, R-Wash.

## Researchers: Testing helps farmers understand soil

### Soil pH a concern in high rainfall areas

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

DAVENPORT, Wash. — No-till farming increases soil organic matter, and acidification on the surface. Tillage depletes organic matter and may impact nutrients.

“Each practice tends to have different results, trade-offs and problems,” Dave Huggins, a USDA Agricultural Research Service soil scientist, said.

Testing soil will help farmers understand those trade-offs and what to do about them, he said.

“That’s part of what these tests are for — to diagnose what’s going on and hopefully over time to provide more interpretation about what we should be doing about it.”

Soil pH is becoming more of a concern in some locations, he said. Low pH impacts yields in higher rainfall zones, while drier areas that have a higher natural pH are also seeing acidification, but not to the same degree.

“We need to be tracking what’s going on with soil pH,



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

USDA Agricultural Research Service soil scientist David Huggins talks about assessing soil health in a pit during a field day June 28 on Washington State University’s Wilke Research and Extension Farm in Davenport, Wash.

because it’s an issue that will not go away,” Huggins said. “We’ll have to address it, even in the drier areas eventually.”

Farmers and field men express interest about soil more often, Aaron Esser, director of Washington State University’s Adams County Extension, said.

“We understand a lot more

about wheat, plants, disease, stripe rust and management, but we really don’t know a lot about the soil,” he said. “We’ve got a lot of the agronomic parts figured out. Now let’s start looking at what are some things in the soil we can do to help enhance plant growth and long-term sustainability.”

Several quick soil tests were developed elsewhere in the country to measure biological activity and health, Huggins said. He’s adapting the tests for the Pacific Northwest.

The field day was at the Wilke Research and Extension Farm in Davenport, Wash.

## U.S. Wheat seminar builds relationships with buyers

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

A Washington grain commissioner traveled halfway around the world recently to take part in a seminar promoting wheat to Asian buyers.

Dana Herron, a member of the Washington Grain Commission, recently spoke at a U.S. Wheat Associates procurement seminar in Bangkok, Thailand.

He represents Benton, Franklin, Kittitas, Klickitat and Yakima counties, and co-owns Tri-State Seed Co., in Connell, Wash.

The seminar provided customers with information about the Federal Grain Inspection Service system and how it benefits overseas buyers.

“That helps (the buyer) get exactly the flour he wants for his mill or bakery,” Herron said.

Herron said he wanted to “connect the dots” along the wheat quality chain — from the wheat breeder, the seed dealer, the farmer, the grain buyer and the exporter — “how we identify and maintain the integrity of our wheat quality,” he said.

Quality control representatives and buyers from mills in Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia attended the seminar. Most of them were “brand spanking new” to the U.S. Wheat message, Herron said.

“One of the things we need to remember is that Indonesian market is so large — the people are at their peak earning years, they have disposable income, they like our product,” he said. “If they would just buy (a blend of) 5 percent club wheat for their products, we would be out of club wheat for many years. Indonesia is a huge market and we need to spend more time and money there.”

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## Foodmakers argue Washington’s \$18 million fine unconstitutional

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

The packaged food and beverage industry has detailed its claim that a record \$18 million fine levied by a judge in Washington state for campaign violations is unconstitutionally excessive.

The Grocery Manufacturers Association argues the penalty is out of line with precedent and too harsh for what was at worst an inadvertent violation of a vague state law, according to a brief filed June 21 in the Court of Appeals in Tacoma, Wash.

The penalty stemmed from the \$11 million that GMA spent in 2013 to help defeat an initiative that would have required labels on products with genetically modified ingredients. Thurston County Superior Court Judge Anne Hirsch ruled last year that GMA intentionally broke the law by concealing the identities of the brand-name companies that contributed to GMA’s political fund.

According to Hirsch, the penalty was justified because sophisticated and experienced GMA executives schemed to shield the sources of millions of dollars spent to influence an election.

GMA, which argued that reporting itself as the donor should have satisfied state law, is appealing the conviction and fine.

“There was no evidence that GMA’s failure to timely disclose its members’ identities and contributions misled any voter,” GMA argues. “Yet the trial court punished GMA with an \$18 million fine — the largest disclosure penalty ever imposed in this country.”

The previous record was a \$3.8 million fine in 2006 by the Federal Elections Commission against the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp., commonly known as Freddie Mac.

GMA claims the judgment violates the Constitution’s Eighth Amendment, which prohibits excessive fines.

The attorney general’s office has yet to respond to GMA’s appeal. The office had no comment Wednesday on GMA’s opening brief.

GMA set up a political fund in 2013 to oppose GMO-labeling efforts across the country. From the fund, GMA contributed to the “No on Initiative 522” campaign in Washington under its own name. GMA says it thought it was satisfying state disclosure laws.

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