

**From:** [Juan Monje](#)  
**To:** [EFSEC mi Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment: Columbia River Transmission Project (PowerBridge Application)  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 19, 2025 7:23:04 PM

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External Email

## **Public Comment for EFSEC: Environmental Justice, River Protection, and Tribal Rights Must Come First**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am submitting these concerns due to the significant potential impacts this project may have on the Columbia River, on areas of treaty-protected importance to Tribal Nations, and on communities already disproportionately affected by industrial development.

This is not just a technically reasonable proposal. It is a 100-mile disruption to one of the most important rivers in the Pacific Northwest and people deserve honest answers before EFSEC considers advancing it.

### **1. Land-use laws exist to protect communities not to be bent for industrial convenience**

Skamania County's Comprehensive Plan and Shoreline Master Program put environmental protection, habitat health, and Tribal cultural resources at the center of all decision-making. Right now, the applicant has provided no evidence that an industrial-scale underwater trench aligns with those community standards. If environmental justice means anything, it means we do not force massive industrial projects onto counties and shorelines unless they clearly meet local land-use law.

### **2. Who is this project really for?**

If this project is truly meant to serve residents and regional clean-energy goals, then why is the converter station placed in the Rivergate Industrial Area, an area already targeted for multiple large data-center expansions? We have seen again and again how "clean energy transmission" becomes a backdoor subsidy for private data-center growth. EFSEC must require full transparency about who benefits and who bears the burden. Further, EFSEC must make binding assurances that the power for this project will not go towards serving data centers in Oregon and Washington.

### **3. Trenching 100 miles of riverbed is not harmless it is an environmental justice**

## **issue**

Hydro-jet trenching will churn up contaminated sediment near Bradford Island, Bonneville Dam, and Portland Harbor areas where Tribal communities, subsistence fishers, and low-income residents already face disproportionate pollution impacts.

Where is the independent sediment-disturbance modeling?

How will EFSEC evaluate harm to people who rely on fishing for food, culture, and livelihood? Environmental justice requires centering those voices not treating them as an afterthought.

### **4. Respecting Tribal Sovereignty Requires Transparency, Not Assumptions**

PowerBridge says it will “respect Tribal concerns.” This river carries the history, treaty rights, burial grounds, and living cultures of multiple Indigenous Nations. Respect is meaningless without action. This river carries the history, treaty rights, burial grounds, and living cultures of multiple Indigenous Nations.

### **5. An expedited review for a 100-mile underwater trench is irresponsible**

The idea that this review could be “expedited” is deeply troubling. What is the justification for accelerating a project of this magnitude before Tribal consultation, sediment modeling, EMF studies, and ecological reviews are complete?

Environmental justice means slowing down when the stakes are this high not speeding up to meet corporate timelines.

### **6. Will this project fuel more industrial buildout?**

EFSEC must require the applicant to answer plainly: Does your firm, or your partners, expect this new transmission capacity to support additional industrial or data-center development in the Rivergate area? Communities deserve to know whether this project is about public benefit or about enabling the next wave of high-energy-use industry.

### **7. River species deserve science based on the river not the ocean**

The applicant’s EMF, heat, and cable-impact studies are based on ocean environments. The Columbia River is not the ocean. It is shallower, warmer, burdened with legacy pollution (including heat pollution), and a critical migration route for salmon, lamprey, and sturgeon. Where are the river-specific studies? Where is the research on lamprey navigation, sturgeon electrosensitivity, and heat impacts to shallow redds? Protecting river life is not optional; it is a matter of cultural survival and ecological justice.

## Conclusion

The Columbia River has carried Indigenous Nations, fed communities, and sustained entire ecosystems since long before any company existed. A project that cuts 100 miles into its bed cannot be rushed, minimized, or justified without full transparency and full consent. Environmental justice, Tribal rights, and the health of the river must come before corporate timelines. Until all of these questions are answered with science, honesty, and community-centered accountability this project should not move forward.

Thank you for considering these comments.

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