Columbia River Treaty Overview

“Relating to International Cooperation in Water Resource Development in the Columbia River Basin”

An agreement between Canada and the United States of America, signed at Washington, D.C., January 17, 1961

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About 15% of the basin is in Canada, and 35% of the average annual flow comes from Canada (as measured at The Dalles, Oregon)

Flow at Canadian border varies from 14,000 to 555,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), much wider variation (1:40) than Mississippi or St. Lawrence.

Unregulated flow at The Dalles varies from 36,000 to 1,240,000 cfs a ratio of 1:34, compared to the St. Lawrence 1:2 and Mississippi 1:25 ratios.

U.S. federal projects are authorized to meet multiple purposes: flood risk, hydropower, fish and wildlife, navigation, irrigation, recreation, and municipal and industrial water supply.
1948 Columbia River Flood

1948 flood destroyed Vanport, Oregon, a city of 20,000-30,000 people

About 50-60 people were killed

Damaged homes, farms, and levees from British Columbia (e.g. Trail) all the way to Astoria, Oregon

Vanport, Oregon in 1948

Trail, B.C. in 1948
BPA Administrator and Corps of Engineers’ Northwestern Division Engineer are the U.S. Entity that implements the Treaty for the U.S. The Canadian Entity is B.C. Hydro, a province owned electric utility, for implementation of the Treaty and the Province of British Columbia for the disposal of the Canadian Entitlement.

* Required in TREATY    ** Established by ENTITY    *** Established by PEB
General Treaty Overview

• The Treaty required Canada to construct and operate three large dams (Mica, Arrow, and Duncan) with 15.5 million acre-feet (Maf) of storage in the upper Columbia River basin in Canada “for improving the flow of the Columbia River.”
  − 8.45 Maf (of the 15.5 Maf) of the Canadian Treaty storage is operated for flood control in Canada and the U.S., with access to all storage in Canada in accordance with certain conditions.
  − 15.5 Maf is operated for optimum power generation within flood control constraints

• The Treaty allowed the U.S. to construct and operate Libby Dam on the Kootenai River in Montana for “flood control and other purposes in the United States of America”.

• The Treaty requires the U.S. and Canada are to share equally the calculated downstream power benefits produced in the U.S. from the operation of Canadian Treaty storage.

• Reservoir storage is operated to reduce flood flows, and shift energy from low value time periods to high value time periods.

• By securing cooperative measures for hydropower and flood control through the Treaty, other benefits are made possible. Supplemental operating agreements have been mutually agreed upon in support of ecosystem requirements in both countries.
Columbia River Treaty Dams

Completed

DUNCAN        1967
ARROW         1968
MICA          1973
LIBBY         1973

Kinbasket Lake
Duncan Dam
Mica Dam
Arrow Lake
Keenleyside Dam
Koocanusa Lake
Libby Dam
Treaty Flood Control

Current

• Canada is obligated for the first 60 years to operate 8.45 Maf of Canadian Treaty storage in accordance with certain procedures and a flood control operating plan prepared by the Corps for the U.S. Entity. (The U.S. paid $64 million.)

• In accordance with certain conditions, Canada must also operate all additional storage in the Basin in Canada as requested (U.S. payment specified in Treaty).

Post-2024

• In accordance with certain conditions, Canada is obligated to operate its existing storage to meet U.S. flood control needs (U.S. payment based on Canadian economic losses and operating costs.)
Treaty Hydropower

**Current**

- 15.5 Maf of Canadian Treaty storage for optimum power generation downstream in Canada and the United States (within flood control constraints).
- U.S. must deliver electric power to Canada equal to one-half the calculated U.S. power benefits from the operation of Canadian Treaty storage (referred to as the Canadian Entitlement).
- Non-federal hydro-project owners (five mid-Columbia projects) deliver 27.5% of the Canadian Entitlement to BPA for delivery to British Columbia.

**Future**

- Existing Treaty obligations on hydropower regarding Canada’s share of the downstream power benefits continue unless the Treaty is terminated (with ten years’ notice).
COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY

• The Treaty continues unless either country terminates with ten years’ notice;

• Some provisions survive termination. For example, certain flood control provisions remain in force for the life of the dams or until flows in Canada cease to contribute to potential flood hazard in the United States.
Treaty also allows the entities to prepare and implement detailed operating plans that may produce results more advantageous to both countries than those that would arise from operations under the Assured Operating Plan.
Supplemental Operating Agreements (SOAs)

Historic context and application of SOAs:

- Mutual benefits have included power and non-power objectives.
- Supplemental operating agreements have been mutually agreed upon in support of ESA and ecosystem requirements in both countries.
- Agreements have been multi-year (Entity) agreements or within-year (Operating Committee) agreements.
- Agreements have been updated as needed to address concerns or changed circumstances of each country.
A product of years of collaboration and consultations with federal agencies, the region’s states and tribes, and extensive stakeholder engagement, the key objectives for the United States are guided by the Regional Recommendation.
The U.S. Negotiating Team’s objectives were developed with input from the people most directly affected in the United States by the Treaty through the Regional Recommendation, which concluded it is in the best interest of the United States to modernize the Treaty regime, so that our legacy of mutual benefits with Canada will continue into the future.

The key U.S. objectives include:
- Continued, careful management of flood risk;
- Ensuring a reliable and economical power supply; and
- Improving ecosystem benefits

For additional information:
https://www.state.gov/columbia-river-treaty/
Status of Negotiations

• The State Department is leading the U.S. Negotiating Team in discussions with the Government of Canada on how to modernize the Columbia River Treaty regime. There have been seven rounds so far, and the next will be September 10-11 in Cranbrook, B.C.

• To date, our conversations with Canada have been frank and productive. We are working together to modernize the Treaty regime in a way that benefits both countries.

• We also continue to meet regularly with U.S. stakeholders and Tribes in the Columbia River Basin.