



**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL
ENGINEERS, LOCAL 97**

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Workers at US Army Corps of Engineers learned today that they will be outsourced in a scheme to divest responsibility for preventing flooding, generating hydropower, and protecting salmon on the Columbia River.

“River users will soon face big changes in the way the Columbia River system is run,” said a union spokesperson today.

The Northwestern Division, US Army Corps of Engineers proposes to devolve responsibility for reservoir operation to 4 individual offices, instead of maintaining centralized control at its Northwestern Division headquarters in Portland.

According to Gordon Taxer, President of IFPTE Local 97, decisions involving flows on major tributaries, such as the Kootenai, Clearwater, and Willamette Rivers will be determined by Corps District offices, rather than by the basin-wide Reservoir Control Center located in Northwestern Division. Taxer predicts confusion, duplication, and conflicting operational decisions to increase by “salami slicing” operational responsibility for the river basin to multiple Corps offices.

“To abandon a basin-wide approach to running the Columbia River system in favor of a piecemeal operation is clearly contrary to the Army’s emphasis on adopting a holistic watershed approach,” said Taxer, “ This is absolutely backwards; It is the wrong plan at the wrong time, based on vague objectives without specified goals—we can only hope that we never have a repeat of the 1996 flood (when millions of dollars of damages were prevented by the skilled engineers and technicians who will be outsourced by this plan).”

“Regional stakeholders (and employees) have been kept in the dark about the changes underway,” he added, “They won’t see what has happened until the plan is in motion.”

The Northwestern Division Reservoir Control Center in Portland has regulated Columbia Basin river operations for some 40 years to prevent floods, generate hydropower, protect fish and wildlife, and provide navigation, recreation, irrigation, and municipal water supplies, while adding value to the region.

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IFPTE Local 97 represents approximately 120 professional and administrative employees of the Northwestern Division, US Army Corps of Engineers, located in Portland, Oregon and Omaha, Nebraska responsible for water resources development throughout the Columbia and Missouri River Basins and military construction throughout the northern states west of the Mississippi River.