

Area Irrigation Engineer,  
Bureau of Indian Affairs,  
Box 4097, Portland, Ore.

Aug. 13, 1955

Mr. Paul F. Henderson

Dear Sir:

I was contacted recently by Mr. John Brooks, Yakima Agency engineer who acquainted me with your commendable interest in the welfare of the remnant Wanapum band of non-treaty Indians whose home is at Priest Rapids on the Columbia River.

In 1951 and 1952 it became evident that the Corps of Army Engineers was proceeding with plans for a high dam at Priest Rapids. Upon request of the Indians, addressed to the Department, Mr. Brooks made an elevation survey to determine the graveyard location with reference to the lake elevation of the proposed project. I believe you are familiar with this survey

Subsequently Grant County Public Utility District No. 2, headquarters at Ephrata, Wash., sought for and obtained an exploratory permit which was granted by the Federal Power Commission. This was for a proposed project at approximately River Mile 397 on the Columbia River.

Originally the Wanapums [the name means River People] acting as a group that had maintained tribal identity through both residence, custom and religion at their last home along the river, appealed to the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs for protection. But of course you understand that the Wanapums have only a moral right and that of adverse possession. Evidently, because of religious belief, their ancestors had not obtained a single fee patent or homestead on any

small site in the once vast land holdings of their ancestors.

Although the Bureau of Indian Affairs was sympathetic and kindly to the needs of the Wanapums, it appeared there was nothing that could be done for them unless by means of Presidential Proclamation or Congressional legislation.

The preliminary report was issued October 21, 1954 by the Federal Power Commission to the Public Utility District for the project, No. 2114. Article II of this permit states:

"Permittee shall during the course of its investigations under the preliminary permit provide for the adequate protection of Wanapum Indian graves and historical relics."

It may be stated here that long before the order was issued officers of the Grant County PUD when that group became interested in the project, assured the Wanapums that protective measures would be taken in event a permit were issued.

It is my pleasure to inform you for the Wanapums that during the period following the issuance of the order, protective measures have been taken that meet with approval of the Wanapum head man. Moreover the Wanapums have acted in such a manner as not to force the permittee to undertake costly undertakings. They have also resorted to no long negotiations that would lead to costly delays when speed was desired by the permittee.

The permittee has shown a deep, thorough and humane understanding, an appreciation of the cultural aspects of these historic aboriginal people, and have consulted with them many times to be sure their wishes were being determined correctly. The permittee has exhibited by actual performance a constant willingness to ease the worry and distraught minds that originally beset the elders because of their religious beliefs and because their relatives are buried at and in proximity to the sites known as Priest Rapids and Wanapum Dams.

The Wanapums' head man asks me to convey appreciation to you for your interest and understanding and to thank you for the survey in the past.

He realizes that neither you nor the permittee is responsible for the condition of civilization that has altered the way of life for the Wanapums.

That o dam sites in which the permittee is interested do not endanger the principal graveyard of the people. Protective measures have been taken regarding the widespread burial places that by my own "on the spot" investigation, met with the approval of the Indians concerned.

Protective measures have also been taken regarding the historical relics referred to and consideration has been given as in the power of those concerned to other humane needs of the Wanapums. All this has been done with a praiseworthy spirit of cooperation and willingness.

I am convinced that whatever can be done expediently for the comfort and welfare of the Wanapums will be done if the project matures.

It is in this open-minded and expedient manner that the moral rights of the people been approached.

It is this spirit of cooperation and actual evidence in the field that caused the head man, Puck Hyah Foot, the last prophet of the Wanapums, to state in a speech when Resolution No. 252, naming the Wanapum Dam, was passed by the commission of the Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County, May 12, 1955:

"We once worried and were afraid. But as long as we know we have friends we have nothing to fear in the future."

Should there be any specific questions the Wanapums can answer for you, I am sure they will be most happy to do so.

Sincerely

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Resolution No. 252 Enclosed: