



**West**

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

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## 2018 Legislative Council on River Governance

CSG West's Legislative Council on River Governance (LCRG) held its annual meeting in Butte, Montana on August 20-21, hosted by LCRG Chair, Montana Representative Zach Brown (WLA '16). The Council is made up of appointed legislators from the four Columbia River Basin states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Council members come together annually to share ideas and discuss issues of common concern. Eleven legislators and several guests attended the meeting, where they heard from 21 different speakers on a variety of topics.

Attendees heard from experts on a range of topics relevant to life and work in the Columbia River Basin. Topics included the current Columbia River Treaty negotiations, aquatic invasive species prevention, the development of a Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement, a recent report advocating for the removal of the Lower Snake River dams, the challenge of balancing economic development with environmental protections in the basin, irrigation modernization and the availability of "small hydro" technology, and strategies states can use to incentivize water conservation among private landowners.

The meeting also featured a history and policy tour led by Representative Jim Keane (WLA '02) and Senator Jon Sesso, both of whom represent Butte in the Montana statehouse. During the tour, Representative Keane shared his encyclopedic knowledge of the mining history of the area. The tour included a visit to a former Superfund site that is now a beautiful 25-mile restored riparian area; the Anselmo Mine Yard, the most intact remaining mine yard in the area; the famous Berkeley Pit; and the Granite Mountain Memorial Overlook, which commemorates the tragic Speculator Fire Disaster on June 8, 1917, in which 168 men died—the greatest loss of life in hard-rock mining history.

Officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, along with Senator Sesso, the Superfund coordinator for Butte-Silver Bow County, described the local-state-federal cooperation on cleanup of the many contaminated areas in Silver Bow County. After three decades of slow-moving cleanup work, the EPA announced in June its proposed plan to complete its Superfund cleanup efforts in and around Butte and remove the project from EPA's National Priority List by 2024.



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The 20th anniversary of the founding of the LCRG provided an opportunity for members to reflect on the value of the Council and consider possibilities for moving forward into the future. Attending Council members approved a motion directing CSG West staff to submit a letter to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, on behalf of the Council, requesting additional funding to support state efforts to keep zebra and quagga mussels out of the Columbia River Basin.

Council members unanimously approved the nomination of Washington Representative Bruce Chandler (WLA '01) as the 2018-19 LCRG Chair, pending final approval by the full Council. Representative Chandler, who previously served as LCRG Chair in 2014-15, will host next year's meeting in Washington.

While appointments to the Council are limited to those states included in the Columbia River Basin, all western legislators are welcome to attend LCRG meetings. CSG West will provide details on next year's meeting as they become available. Special thanks to NorthWestern Energy for their sponsorship and support of the of the program.

**Rep. Zach  
Brown**

*LCRG Chair*

**Thank you  
for your  
leadership**



*Additional photos below...*



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