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SNAKE RIVER TESTIMONY
Portland, OR
3 February 2000

(In favor of breaching)

My name is Dan Kent, representing Pacific Rivers Council, a nonprofit river and native fish advocacy group based in Eugene, Oregon. I grew up on a small farm in eastern Washington about 20 miles from the Snake River canyon and I spent many summer days by the slow-moving river.

As a native of the wheat-growing Palouse Hills, I know how important the Snake River dams are to the farmers of eastern Washington. But I also know that wheat farmers have a viable alternative, and that alternative is shipping by rail.

The salmon have no alternative.

The Snake River has been turned into a freeway for grain only since the 1970s. Today, one quarter of America's feed grain and 35 percent of its wheat moves down the Snake/Columbia system. Turning the Snake back into a river will require a re-investment in rail.

The discussion of the fate of the dams always seems to come back to dollars. But unfortunately, what saves transportation dollars, kills salmon. The lower Snake River, because of our federal dams, has been slowed to a lake-like 1 mile per hour.

According to one federal study last year, the market values of the navigation, power and irrigation provided by the dams are worth a combined \$300 million per year. At about the same time, the Idaho Statesman estimated that a restored Snake River salmon fishery will contribute at least that much to the regional economy every year. Restored salmon runs mean a revitalized regional economy. Commercial, sport and tribal fishers depend on Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead runs.

Indeed, the most greatest economic value the Snake can provide is clean, cool water, a healthy river, and abundant wild salmon.

It is time that we recognize that the Snake River is not a "free" resource; a freeflowing Snake and the habitat it provides has great economic value, and the dams have lessened that value dramatically.

It is time to retool the river in favor of native salmon.

PACIFIC RIVERS COUNCIL

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