



**WASHINGTON STATE  
FARM BUREAU**

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March 27, 2000

Brig. Gen. Carl Strock  
U.S. Corps of Engineers  
220 NW 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97208-2870

Dear Gen. Strock:

On behalf of the Washington Farm Bureau, I am concerned about comments attributed to you in a recent article in The Portland Oregonian.

According to The Oregonian, you indicated that "the receptivity of the population" as expressed in 2,000 Federal Caucus hearing comments would play a role in the Corps' decision whether to recommend breaching dams on the lower Snake River.

1

The paper interpreted your comment to mean that the "collective sentiment" could influence your decision if the Corps "finds science does not clearly indicate" a preferred alternative.

As the Corps is clearly aware, the National Environmental Policy Act requires you to consider more than science, including "historic, cultural and natural aspects" of an area's heritage. It also requires you to mitigate that impact as much as possible.

While we understand the importance of tribal culture and heritage, we also believe that after more than four decades, with an existing rural economy and communities dependent on the dams, that they also have legitimate historic, cultural and social values that must be taken into consideration.

2

I am also concerned with how you plan to evaluate the "receptivity of the population" based on the comments at the public hearings. In particular, will comments pro and con be counted equally?

In Pasco, Wash., several county commissioners and other elected officials testified against breaching the dams and indicated they were speaking on behalf of thousands of constituents. Will their comments be counted as thousands or given equal weight with individual anti-dam activists?

2  
cont.

In places such as Portland, Seattle and as far away as Alaska, where breaching the dams would have little direct impact on the residents, the majority of the people testifying were apparently in favor of breaching the dams. Should their comments be given equal weight to the sentiment of the people of Southeastern Washington whose jobs and quality of life would be most affected?

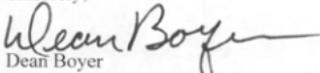
Should the comments of people who were paid to attend the hearings by national anti-dam organizations count as much as the people who had to take a day off work to testify? As you noted in the newspaper article, many of those anti-dam activists traveled around the Northwest and Alaska to testify more than once? As you try to gauge the "collective sentiment," how will you determine if somebody has testified once or a hundred times?

3

I am seriously interested in learning more about how the Corps intends to weigh the "collective sentiment" and the role that sentiment will play in your decision.

The Washington Farm Bureau, for example, submitted comments at the Pasco hearing on behalf of our 20,000 members, offering what we felt were fair criticisms and objective recommendations based on the Corps' own five-year study. But had we known that your decision might come down to a popularity contest, perhaps we should have urged each of our members to call or write you directly – and often.

Sincerely,



Dean Boyer  
Director of Public Relations