

MAY 15 2000

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From: Friends of the Clearwater [foc@wildrockies.org]
Sent: Friday, March 31, 2000 1:57 PM
To: Salmonstudy
Cc: foc@wildrockies.org
Subject: Salmon Comments

Friends of the Clearwater
PO Box 9241
Moscow, ID 83843
email <foc@wildrockies.org>

March 31, 2000

RE: SALMON STUDY COMMENTS

To the Army Corps of Engineers,

The following comments on the Corps' Lower Snake River Study are submitted on behalf of Friends of the Clearwater, a non-profit conservation group working to protect the forests and waters of the Clearwater basin.

We place returning the wild salmon runs to their historic levels as the highest priority in this debate. We feel all other considerations should be secondary.

Extinction of Snake River salmon and steelhead is not an option. The vast majority of scientists say breaching the lower Snake River dams must be part of any successful recovery plan. Economic studies show dam removal is affordable and the least expensive option on the table.

We support breaching the four lower Snake River dams as well as water augmentation from southern Idaho. According to the great majority of scientists working on this issue, dam breaching is the only option with a high probability of restoring Snake River salmon. Several scientific reviews, including the Independent Scientific Group (ISG), Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB), and Process for Analyzing and Testing Hypothesis (PATH), have criticized the salmon barging program and called for restoring more natural, free-flowing river conditions in order to recover the fish. According to PATH, dam removal is the most likely option for restoring healthy, harvestable salmon runs. In addition, 206 scientists signed a letter to President Clinton, agreeing with PATH's conclusions about restoring a free-flowing river. In 1999, dam breaching was also endorsed as the most viable option for salmon recovery by the Western Division of the American Fisheries Society.

Many smolts die during their estuary life cycle. Part of this mortality is likely due to delayed mortality inflicted on barges during transportation on barges and trucks. In addition, many salmon and steelhead may die because the estuaries are not as nutrient rich. Nutrient rich soil from Columbia Basin used to be deposited in these estuaries. This is no longer the case, because the numerous dams throughout the basin have stopped the movement of this nutrient rich sediment.

Our group supports Alternative 4 in the Corps DEIS because it is the surest way to save Snake River salmon from extinction. We support breaching dams. Humans can adapt to changing conditions; clearly the salmon cannot. Please do not delay on breaching the four lower Snake River dams. Delaying could weaken these wild salmon and steelhead runs beyond recovery.

Sincerely,

//s//
Kristin Ruether
Friends of the Clearwater

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