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February 17, 2000

Senator Slade Gorton
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20510-4701

Senator Patty Murray
111 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington D. C. 20510-4703

Dear Senator Gorton and Senator Murray,

The Port of Benton Commission recognizes that salmon are a national resource and must be protected, but breaching the dams is not the answer. The Commission joins with other Northwest individuals and entities in voicing our unwavering support against breaching of the four dams on the lower Snake River.

As elected officials, it is of our responsibility to ensure that federal officials hear the message of those most affected if this drastic action were to take place. It would be a tale of economic ruin as farmers would be without water to grow their crops, resulting in a domino effect for the rest of the economy; surviving businesses and individuals would shoulder higher power rates; the State of Washington transportation planners, already burdened with transportation budget cuts from the passage of I-695, would be overwhelmed by the 700,000 additional trucks using the states roads and highways, replacing the barges on the Snake River.

The National Marine Fisheries Service, the lead agency with jurisdiction for protecting salmon and steelhead under the Endangered Species Act, indicated there would be little value to fish recovery associated with dam removal.

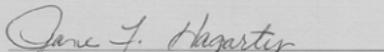
On November 6, 1999, an opinion/editorial in The Oregonian from Portland, Oregon, wrote "The Bonneville Power Administration, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Marine Fisheries Service suggest that habitat above the dams and the estuary below them are the real killing fields. They argue that habitat, especially the fresh-water streams where salmon and steelhead spend their maiden year, should receive the greatest emphasis in any successful recovery effort."

We believe that the elimination of the multiple benefits provided to the people of the Northwest from the operation of the four lower Snake River dams is too high a price to pay for what appears to be minimal or no benefit to fish. We also believe that declining fish runs must be rebuilt. However, we must do so with a comprehensive understanding of which measures will provide the greatest benefit

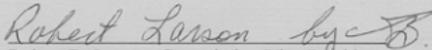
to fish. Since it is not a proven fact, only a hypothesis, that breaching the dams would save the salmon, it is only reasonable that more cost effective measures such as stringent restrictions on fishing, investments in habitat repair, crackdowns on hatchery operations that over time have hurt wild fish, and alterations to fish-passage facilities at the dams be implemented rather than the extreme measure of dam breaching.

The Port of Benton Commission strongly urges each and everyone of you to join us in opposing dam breaching on the lower Snake River.

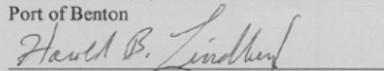
Sincerely,



Jane F. Hagarty, Commission President
Port of Benton



Robert D. Larson, Commission Vice-President
Port of Benton



Harold B. Lindberg, Commission Secretary
Port of Benton

c: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers ✓ 019
Bonneville Power Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Port Counsel and Executive Director