

FEB 19 2000

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SANDY CUNNINGHAM

DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES
CLERK OF THE BOARD

February 10, 2000

To Whom This May Concern:

Since 1992 when I was first elected to the commission, I have been attending meetings, getting reports and reading them and attending information meetings on the subject of salmon recovery and the possible ways to enhance the steelhead and salmon runs in the Snake River. Many ways to help the runs have been mentioned. The gathering and barging of smolt to the ocean seems to be one of the most promising.

The collection systems at the dams also seems to be an alternative that is working. A surface collection system at Silcott Island was proposed in one of the earlier meetings, and this possibility may need to be investigated. Making the dams more smolt friendly also is working, and smolt survival has been much higher.

There has finally been an attempt to deal with the Caspian Terns at Rice Island, but I am not sure if this has helped very much. More information must be gathered on this subject.

The problem of harvest in the ocean is also one that has a far greater affect on the runs than has been admitted by most of the people advocating removal of the dams. Columbia River harvest also has a tremendous impact on the returning runs.

The impact breaching would have on transportation in the upper snake area is tremendous. The extra expense caused by not being able to barge the grain and other products currently moved on the river system would have a terrible affect on the economy of the area. It also would stress the highway system to the point of breaking. Damage caused to the highways and railroads running along the river by breaching must also be taken into account. A great deal of damage occurred during the test draw down to those systems close to the river. And this does not even consider the electrical power that would be lost if breaching takes place. The breaching of the dams should not be considered until **all** other possibilities have been tried.

The silt that would be carried down river for a period of years, (I have heard experts speculate that possibly six or more) would also decimate the runs for a period of time that would destroy any run that might remain in the system. Anyone who was here at the time of the draw down also knows that the mud flats exposed deny any access to the river for years. No one would be able to use the river below Lewiston-Clarkston for a very long time.

I urge you not to consider breaching the dams until it has been positively proven there is no other way to save the salmon and steelhead, and even then give consideration to the fact that the very act of breaching may effectively destroy what is left of the runs.

Sincerely,

Don Scheibe
Asotin County Commissioner
District #1

DS/vb