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March 3, 2000

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Walla Walla District
201 North Third Avenue
Walla Walla, Washington 99362

Dear U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

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

1 As a Washington port facility, it is part 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.

Representatives of your agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, 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.

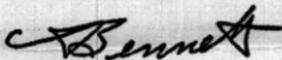
On November 6, 1999, an opinion/editorial in The Oregonian from Portland, Oregon, wrote "The Bonneville Power Administration, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Marine Fisheries Service suggest that habitat above the dams and the estuary below them are the real killing fields. They argue 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 and staff strongly urge you to join us in opposing dam breaching on the lower Snake River.

Sincerely,



Ben Bennett,
Executive Director

c: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Walla Walla District
Port Commission and Counsel