

Idaho County Property Owners Association, Inc.
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March 7, 2000

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Department of the Army
Walla Walla District Corps of Engineers
attn: Lower Snake River Study
201 North Third Avenue
Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876

Gentlemen:

Idaho County Property Owners Association, Inc. represents property owners in Idaho County. At the annual member meeting the group unanimously adopted the following policy:

"We object to breaching the four lower Snake River dams (Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite.)"

There is no firm assurance that breaching the dams will restore the salmon. Breaching the dams is not about salmon recovery, but is an approach to land and people control similar to the spotted owl. Other more immediate measures need to be taken that have a better chance of restoring the salmon runs. These include controlling predators, reducing harvest, both in the ocean and in the river system, continue to improve the dam bypass systems for smolts and adults, consider a natural river bypass, and count hatchery fish in the recovery statistics.

1 | According to a recent Associated Press article the electric supply in the Pacific Northwest cannot keep up with the population growth. Why are we considering taking out dams that provide enough power to supply Idaho and Montana with some left over? The population of Idaho has jumped more than 24 percent in the last decade. Washington population has increased by more than 18 percent and Oregon population has increased by nearly 17 percent. The region is short about 3,000 megawatts of power which is enough to supply three cities the size of Seattle. The energy crisis could come as soon as this summer. What will be the source of new generating facilities to replace that lost if the dams are breached? What will be the cost to rate payers both to pay for the construction and to pay for the increased fuel costs such as oil, coal, gas, or nuclear?

2 | Barge transportation on the river system moves large amounts of products including grain, lumber, chips, and containers. One

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source estimates that just to move the same amount of grain would require a line of trucks 27.2 miles long every day, five days a week. Associated with this would be large increases in the amount of diesel fuel consumed by trucks as opposed to the barge tugs; big increases in road maintenance costs; plus increased possibility of serious accidents and loss of life.

3

Another consequence of breaching the dams would be the ugly mud flats that will be left behind. This was clearly in evidence a few years ago with the experimental draw down at Lewiston. This destroys other species of fish, wildlife habitat, and acres of wetland. The results are devastating to resident species and for recreation use along the river.

4

Statistics show that the smolts are reaching the ocean. Ninety eight percent of transported smolts, either by barge or truck, survive, and 50-60 percent of river run smolts survive for a total survival of about 74%. What is happening in the ocean environment? Rivers such as the Fraser that have no dams at all are experiencing declining salmon runs. This points to ocean conditions, either habitat or harvest, as being the problem and not the four Lower Snake River dams.

5

Predators are a major problem both to the smolts and the adults. Seal lions and seals are both protected species and both have been increasing at about 5 percent a year since the 1970's.

6

Gill nets and ocean harvest are taking a big toll on the adult fish. Why is harvest of an endangered species still permitted?

Idaho County Property Owners support restoring salmon, but other measures should be tried immediately before any further consideration of breaching the dams. Curtail harvest in the ocean and the river system; reduce pressure from predators on smolts and adults; continue to improve the dam bypass systems for smolts and adults; consider a natural bypass system; and count hatchery fish in the recovery statistics.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Mardell J. Edwards Pres.

Mardell J. Edwards
President
Idaho County Property
Owners Association, Inc.

cc: Senator Larry Craig
Senator Mike Crapo
Congressman Helen Chenoweth-Hage
Congressman Mike Simpson
Governor Dirk Kempthorne