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TRI-CITY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

901 N. Colorado, Kennewick, WA 99336-7685 USA 1-800-TRI-CITY 509-735-1000 509-735-6609 fax tridec@owt.com www.owt.com/tridec/

STATEMENT PREPARED FOR  
UNITED STATES CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
DRAFT EIS HEARING  
REGARDING SNAKE RIVER JUVENILE SALMON  
PASCO, WASHINGTON  
FEBRUARY 17, 2000

By William A. Martin, CED  
Tri-City Industrial Development Council (TRIDEC)  
901 North Colorado Street  
Kennewick, WA 99336

The Tri-City Industrial Development Council (TRIDEC) is composed of over 350 dues paying individuals, organizations, and firms having an interest in the economic vitality and growth of the Tri-City area. Our organization has a specific interest in the issues addressed in the Corps of Engineers draft Environmental Impact Statement. The Columbia-Snake River system provides the economic backbone of the entire region and its economic vitality must be protected. Likewise, the anadromous fisheries associated with this Columbia-Snake River system are of vital importance to the entire North Pacific Basin, and represent significant treaty rights to the Native Americans. We all agree action is required to protect and restore the anadromous fisheries resources. The only question is how and when.

The primary focus of today's hearing relates to the proposed breaching of the Snake River Dams to achieve the restoration of the fisheries. BREACHING OF THE DAMS WILL NOT ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE AND WILL CAUSE SIGNIFICANT HARM TO THE ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE REGION. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OTHER SOLUTIONS AVAILABLE WHICH WILL BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN FISHERIES RESTORATION THAN THE PROPOSED BREACHING OF THE DAMS.

First, let me address the identified negative impacts of dam breaching. As described in the Draft EIS, breaching of dams will have an immediate and continuing negative impact due to downstream sediment silting in both the Snake and Columbia River. Breaching of the dams would also result in the loss of significant hydro-generated electrical energy and generating capacity which would have to be replaced by other nonrenewable generating resources, in a region currently faced with a potential electrical power deficit.

The loss of the economical water transport of agricultural and forest industry products would be eliminated on the Snake River. This would have a devastating impact on the economy, not only the Pacific Northwest, but the mountain states as well. The regional rail and highway networks

are both loaded to capacity and supplemental additions to these systems are not realistically available. In particular, the north pacific coast rail system is currently loaded to capacity and alternative routes needed to meet current rail traffic are not currently apparent.

You will also hear from others today regarding the negative impacts dam breaching will have on the irrigated agriculture industry, which has developed along the Snake and Columbia River systems. This industry contains some of the most productive agricultural lands in the world and is an important element in meeting world nutrition needs.

This agricultural complex is a mainstay of the regional economy. Over sixty percent of the local manufacturing workforce is employed in food processing. Over 100 local firms provide services to the agricultural industry.

In the efforts by some interests to promote breaching of the Snake River Dams, the underlying problems, which exist with the anadromous fisheries throughout the North Pacific Region including streams which do not have dams, have been overlooked or ignored. We suggest that attention must be given to other factors effecting the fisheries, such as Habitat, Harvest, and Hatcheries. The draft EIS identifies a number of improvements which can be made in these areas including downstream juvenile salmon transportation, improved fish passage facilities, redirection of current hatchery programs, habitat improvements, and significant harvest restrictions on the commercial, sport, and tribal fisheries as methods of achieving near term improvements in the fisheries resources.

Over the past ten years several billions of dollars have been spent on this problem, with little in effective results achieved. What is needed is a balanced and well thought out program for the recovery of the anadromous fisheries on a regional basis. Alternative 3 in the EIS, Major System Improvements, provides the foundation for such a plan for the Snake River System. This same type of evaluation needs to be prepared and implemented on a regional basis, rather than isolated studies of specific areas.

The current draft EIS results do not support breaching of the Snake River Dams as an effective method of achieving the desired improvement in Snake River fisheries resources. This alternative should be dropped from further consideration, and attention focused on other more effective methods of restoring the fisheries, again in the context of a balanced regional plan.

We also wish to stress that the Corps of Engineers in its evaluation of the comments received on this subject must consider the content and interests of those commenting on these issues. A simple for or against tabulation of comments, while helpful, does not necessarily reflect regional views on the subject. This is an issue which must be decided by the effected residents of the region and their elected officials – not by non-resident special interest pressure groups.

In summary, we strongly support Alternative 3, Major System Improvements in the Draft EIS, and absolutely oppose Alternative 4, Dam Breaching as an acceptable solution to the Snake River fisheries issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views on this subject.