

**Dean Boyer
Director of Public Relations
Washington Farm Bureau**

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**Testimony to the Federal Caucus
"All-H" Public Hearing
Pasco, Washington
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Members of the Federal Caucus:

My name is Dean Boyer, and I am director of public relations for the Washington Farm Bureau. I want thank you for this opportunity to comment on the "All-H" paper.

The Washington Farm Bureau represents farmers and ranchers in every county in Washington state. We are the largest general agricultural organization in Washington with some 20,000 members.

Let me start by emphasizing that our members support efforts to strengthen salmon runs throughout the Northwest. Many of our members are already involved in very real, on-the-ground conservation efforts. Efforts, I might add, that often go unrecognized and unrewarded.

But we also believe that dams are essential to the economy of Eastern Washington.

Dams provide clean, affordable power generation; clean, affordable transportation of goods to and from market; irreplaceable water for irrigation and recreation; and flood control.

And we believe that it's possible to have both dams and salmon.

The Washington Farm Bureau urges the Federal Caucus to reject alternatives in the "All-H" paper that call for breaching dams or drawing down reservoirs, and to pursue options that will strengthen salmon runs without destroying dams.

The science developed through years of research by members of the Federal Caucus and others supports this concept – fish and dams. As members of the Federal Caucus, you have clearly identified multiple options that would significantly enhance salmon runs without breaching dams or drawing down reservoirs.

The most recent studies suggest that breaching dams would cost hundreds of millions of dollars and disrupt the economy of the region, while returning only minimal or speculative benefits for salmon over non-breaching alternatives.

In fact, those same studies suggest that breaching the dams could well have a negative effect on the environment -- through the release of decades of built-up silt, the need to replace lost power generation through increased use of fossil fuels, an increase in truck and rail transportation to replace low-cost, low-pollution barge transportation, and the loss of riparian habitat that now supports many other species.

We urge you to take breaching the dams “off the table,” once and for all.

Taking dams “off the table” would remove one of the most contentious and divisive issues in the Northwest regarding salmon recovery. And it would allow the community to move forward with meaningful salmon recovery measures.

To continue discussing options are so strongly opposed by the people whose livelihoods would be most drastically affected is counterproductive. We urge members of the Federal Caucus to move beyond the destructive debate over dams that is overshadowing more realistic options and to pursue non-breaching alternatives to strengthen salmon runs.

The Federal Caucus has, to its credit, acknowledged that there is no silver bullet when it comes to salmon recovery. The Caucus has acknowledged that there are many issues besides dams to consider in salmon recovery, including overfishing, predation by marine mammals and fish-eating birds, and ocean conditions.

And while there has been some criticism that the Federal Caucus has not moved fast enough, the Washington Farm Bureau believes that you have acted wisely in waiting for

the completion of critical scientific and economic studies – studies that now suggest there are more prudent ways to proceed than breaching dams.

We have, however, been disappointed with some members of the Federal Caucus. One agency blatantly denied water to irrigators in the Methow Valley before issuing a biological opinion that is required by the Endangered Species Act.

The same agency has said publicly that it only cares about fish, not about people, and is now proposing to promulgate rules and regulations that it admits are based on scientific studies that aren't finished and have not been submitted to any other agency for peer review.

And that same agency has indicated that public hearings are a waste of time. That it plans to adopt those rules regardless of what the people want. It even scheduled one public hearing in the Olympia area ... and then had the police turn people away.

That agency has consistently and deliberately misrepresented the Endangered Species Act in public forums. It has refused a request from a U.S. senator to extend the comment period. And it has set a deadline for adopting those rules that clearly indicates that it never intended to take public comment into consideration. That's not what representative government is all about.

We are pleased that the Federal Caucus, as a group, recognizes that the Endangered Species Act requires agencies to rely on sound science ... science that clearly shows that there are feasible alternatives to breaching. We are pleased that the Federal Caucus recognizes that its decisions must balance the needs of the fish with the needs of the people ... especially the people who would be most affected.

Finally, I'd like to introduce some new terminology into the discussion. That term is "agriculturally significant unit."

We hear a lot about the "evolutionarily significant unit" – a term I might add that doesn't appear anywhere in the Endangered Species Act. But what about the "agriculturally significant unit" – the farmer?

On average, every farmer in the United States produces enough food to feed 129 people – 101 here in the United States and 28 abroad. Less than 2 percent of the population in this country feeds the other 98 percent. And each of those farmers, and farm families, is significant.

Within a hundred miles of this hearing room is some of the most productive farmland in the world. But many of those farmers depend on water from those reservoirs, and other benefits made possible by the system of dams that others – most of them from outside the region – now want to destroy.

The Washington Farm Bureau urges you to balance the needs of the “agriculturally significant unit” with the needs of the “evolutionarily significant units” ... to look at the scientific evidence that says we can have both fish and farms ... and to take breaching the dams off the table.

Thank you.