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February 23, 2000

Lower Snake River Study
National Marine Fisheries Service
C/O Bonneville Power Administration – PL
707 W. Main Street, Suite 500
Spokane, WA 99201

Dear Sir or Madam:

Because of the devastating impact that dam breaching would have on Washington State agriculture, I would like to take the opportunity to provide comments on salmon recovery efforts. As a large farm located in Central Washington dam breaching would have a large effect on our business and our state's agricultural economy.

First, I believe that the goal of this process is to save fish. This is what the debate is all about, or what it should be about. The goal is not to find the rationale for taking out dams. We care about salmon. But, we also care about having a healthy economy and Washington State agricultural industry.

If we continue to focus on alternatives such as dam breaching and draw downs, we will end up losers – including the fish. In reality, we should be considering broader holistic solutions that take a serious look at the consequences and really get results. People of the Northwest should oppose removing dams for the following reasons:

- Ten years ago, the best scientific information said that only 10 to 30 percent of salmon smolts survived the trip past the dams. Today, survival is as high as it was in the 1960s and 1970s –before the dams on the lower Snake River were even built!
- Of the 34 West Coast runs of salmon and steelhead that are listed or proposed for listing under the ESA, only 4 pass the dams on the lower Snake River.
- Breaching dams will dry up thousands of acres of productive farmland and will eliminate thousands of agricultural and food processing jobs in Washington State.
- Hydropower is clean and renewable. Replacing hydropower with other sources of power will adversely impact air quality. Using more rail and truck transportation to move our products (instead of barging) adds even more air pollution.

- In addition, during peak summer and winter months, the West Coast power grid is at full capacity. If the power generated by the Snake River Dams is taken away, brownouts could occur.

Obviously, taking out dams is not the answer. The All-H Paper is a step in the right direction. We believe it looks more honestly at improving habitat, hydropower and hatchery operations while addressing harvest. If the region is truly interested in recovering our fish populations we must have a comprehensive plan such as this.

A lot is at stake and these alternatives and study results should be considered carefully. I urge you and your colleagues to base decisions on good, sound science. Our lives here are built around these remarkable rivers. They have given us clean, renewable power, irrigation for growing our crops, navigation for moving our products to market, recreational opportunities, as well as prevented floods. In closing, we need to seriously consider the devastating impact of dam breaching which will destroy our economy and the lives of thousands of people in the Pacific Northwest.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Larry Kent

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