

BIG BEND  CO-OPERATIVE, INC.

RITZVILLE, WASHINGTON 99169

MAR 27 2000

March 24, 2000

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

Re: Please Do Not Breach Snake River Dams

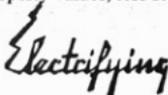
Dear Corps of Engineers Representative:

I am the Manager of Big Bend Electric Cooperative, a consumer-owned electric utility serving over 7,000 consumers in Adams and Franklin Counties in Washington. Our headquarters facility is in Ritzville and we have a customer service center in Mesa. About one-third of our consumers are in business directly involving agriculture. Most of our other consumers are here because they are indirectly involved with agriculture as employees of agriculture or through providing supplies or services to agriculture. On behalf of Big Bend's Board of Trustees and Big Bend's consumers, **we oppose Alternative 4 (breaching 4 Snake River dams) as set forth in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report titled "The Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration Feasibility Report"**.

According to the report, Alternative 4 would have at least two significant negative impacts to consumers served by Big Bend Electric Cooperative. The first major impact would be the increase in costs to transport agriculture products. Agriculture products in the Ritzville area and southeastern part of our service territory are transported to the Snake River where the products are loaded on barges. Since barge traffic would cease with breaching of the Snake River dams, additional trucks and truck miles would be necessary to transport product to the Columbia River instead (at additional cost).

The second, and greatest, impact on consumers of Big Bend Electric Cooperative would be the loss of hydropower generation. The cost of replacement power would be higher causing electric rates to increase. Our wheat farmers are already suffering from depressed prices due to competition on the global market. Increases in operating costs would further reduce their profits and could jeopardize their business operations.

In our area, the side effects of these impacts would be loss of businesses, loss of jobs, displacement of community members, probable environmental issues involving generation of replacement electric power, lower property values, less federal and state tax revenues from our area, and many other effects.



YOUR FARM AND HOME

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Alternative 4 also has many other negative impacts such as impact on wildlife dependent on reservoir conditions, impact on air quality (increased dust), and impact on some forms of recreation. These impacts have a negative impact on the quality of life for our consumers and also for attracting employees to the area to work.

Salmon can be helped through other alternatives besides breaching dams. Please set aside all of the theatrics that have taken place during the comment period on this matter. Please focus instead on the tremendous impact to agriculture, recreation, jobs, and the economy of Washington if such a radical, drastic, and risky decision is made involving the breaching of dams. **We oppose breaching the four hydroelectric dams on the Lower Snake River.**

If you have any questions for me or need more information about Big Bend Electric Cooperative, please feel free to write or call. I can be reached at (509) 659-1700, or by writing to:

James A. Johnson, Manager
Big Bend Electric Cooperative
P.O. Box 348
Ritzville, WA 99169-0348

Thank you for allowing Big Bend to comment on this matter.

Sincerely,



James A. Johnson
Manager