



BROETJE ORCHARDS

March 28, 2000

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 Walla Walla District
 201 N. Third Avenue
 Walla Walla, WA 99362

Attention: Lower Snake River Study

My wife Cheryl and I farm along the Snake River at Fishhook Park. We first started planting apple trees in 1980 and presently have about 4,000 acres. In 1987, we built a warehouse, storage and packing facility for about six (6) million loose boxes produced annually. In addition, we built a preschool in 1987 that is licensed for 67 children. In 1992, 85 three and four-bedroom houses and 28 two-bedroom apartments were constructed, together with a gymnasium, chapel and convenience store. About 875 people are employed full-time year-round. We employ up to 1,500 workers during harvest.

In 1996, we began Jubilee Youth Ranch for troubled teenagers. We now have two dormitories for 100 students, a cafeteria, school administration building, vocational-tech shop, 12 staff houses, a barn and irrigated pasture for the livestock program. We plan to expand the facilities to house up to 200 teens and add a gymnasium and chapel at the Youth Ranch.

All this development and all these jobs are totally dependent upon water from the Snake River. The warehouse and other operations also depend on an affordable supply of electricity. The power costs are more than one million dollars annually.

Being a farmer, I am very aware of the environment and the resources for which we are stewards. We make every effort to return the land to better condition than when it was placed in our hands and to consume the least amount of resources possible.

Water, of course, is very important to us but salmon are as well. All the science and available technology must be used to rebuild the salmon runs. All 14 endangered or threatened salmon runs on the Columbia and Snake Rivers must be considered. The dams on the Snake River only affect three of the salmon species listed. We must look at the whole problem.

The ocean must have all the attention it deserves, since most of the life cycle of the salmon is spent there and 60% die there. Ocean conditions such as water temperatures change, and we have no control over that. In the past 20 years, we have seen the worst natural conditions in history. It has only been in the last two years that we have seen some improvement and salmon returns should respond. Harvest in the ocean is an area that we can and must control. With salmon returns on the increase, let us not kill them with nets! Please let them rebuild.

Ocean troller catch rates continued to rise from 1970 to an all-time high in 1990 when all salmon populations up and down the West Coast were in serious trouble. It has become a worldwide problem as the world fishing fleet doubled between 1970 and 1990. Fisheries biologists estimate that the fishing fleet is twice the capacity that the oceans can sustain. This is the single biggest threat to the salmon.

Why do we allow foreign fisheries to harvest the salmon that we declared threatened and that we have put so much effort into saving? We should push the offshore limits to 200 miles immediately!

As David Welch with Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans pointed out recently,

"The Coho returns to the pristine, undammed Keogh River in British Columbia dropped by 90 percent from 1970 to the late 1990s. This is not a freshwater effect."

This is further evidence that removing the four Snake River dams will not solve the salmon problem. We are wasting too much time and money on studying the Snake River and dams, while ignoring the ocean as a black hole. In the interests of the salmon, we can no longer do this. Quick benefits can be achieved much easier by putting more effort into helping salmon returns from the ocean.

We must also be careful of spring flow augmentation. There is no scientific evidence that flow augmentation help salmon smolt. In the water behind the Snake River dams, Federal fishery scientists found very little mortality. In fact, the highest rates of predation are below Bonneville Dam. Are we doing more damage than good with large spills by creating too much dissolved gas? Use summer flow augmentation solely to control temperature. Limit these to levels provided during 1994 summer flow regimes. We need that water to generate electricity. Greater benefits to the salmon would be achieved by using that money to build spawning channels to expand natural spawning areas, and develop new water storage projects to expand habitat and flow, etc.

Use our water resources wisely. There is more than enough water if we all work together.

In summary, the points I would like to make are as follows:

1. **Fish-Friendly Technology.** Dam survival rates have improved greatly since 1975 and will continue to improve with future technology changes. While they are no longer a major threat to salmon returns, we must continue to add fish-friendly turbines, surface bypass collectors, reduce total dissolved gas, and other technology that is proven scientifically sound.
2. **Ocean Harvests.** Why is it legal to harvest (kill) an endangered species? Deal with the ocean harvest, especially the huge foreign trawl fisheries. In 1995, just 25 tows captured almost 10,000 Chinook by catch. With 2,222 tows on the ocean using giant nets, it is no wonder 60% of all salmon are lost in the ocean.
3. **Predator Control.** A major effort must be made to control natural predators, including Terns. Remove Rice Island, if necessary! One species of bird killing up to one-third of the smolt is unacceptable. Sea lions, harbor seals, other birds, fish and land / sea animals must be controlled. A much greater effort must be made to ensure that other predators (poachers) of returning salmon are severely penalized. Regulations must be strictly enforced.
4. **Habitat Improvements.** Improve the habit on small rivers and streams. We cannot have strong runs without strong spawning streams! Build new spawning channels off the rivers to increase wild returns.
5. **Moratorium.** Please do the only thing that will have immediate impact on salmon runs. Put a moratorium on ocean harvests for three to five years. Use some of the millions now being wasted to pay the boat owners not to kill the salmon. Fishermen are in economic crisis now and this would help them. Such action would create a win-win option and guaranteed immediate results. The bottom fish were recently declared in serious trouble from over-harvest and restrictions were put in place. This is another example of over-harvesting the ocean. Strictly enforce river and stream harvest of weak stocks by stopping all harvest of wild fish. Threatened and endangered species should not be harvested until they are off the list. Tribal fishing rights must be recognized and the Tribes should be involved in predator controls, habitat improvements, new water storage projects, etc.
6. **Flow.** Limit flow augmentation to summer flow regime levels provided during 1994.

7. **Other Dams.** We need to be aware of the impact of other dams, such as Dworshak, Hells Canyon, Oxbow and even Grand Coulee. They have blocked hundreds of miles of spawning habitat. Could fish ladders be built to make these dams fish-friendly?
8. **The Real Problem.** Ten years and hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on studying river and dam breaching issues – all of which has resulted in little help for the salmon. We must look at the real problem – the ocean. This can be done quickly with immediate results. Dam breaching, if approved, would take years and leave us with a big question. Will results be good or bad?
9. **Power.** Electricity produced by a clean renewable resource would have to be replaced by several plants powered by a non-renewable resource. This would add pollutants to the environment as well as consume a nature resource that is already rapidly being depleted.

Thank you for taking time to review my thoughts and suggestions for protective remedies in which we all win. Most importantly, our resources are preserved - and we all survive!

Respectfully



Ralph Broetje
Owner