March 11, 2000

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Federal Caucus Comment Record
% BPA-PL
707 W. Main St., Suite 500
Spokane, WA 99201

Dear Comment Recorders:

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed breaching of four dams on the Snake River as part of the Salmon Restoration Program. The loss of these dams would impose serious economies hardships on the people of the Inland Northwest. There is no convincing evidence that breaching the dams would substantially increase salmon runs. There are other, less economically drastic measures that need to be evaluated and applied first.

This whole program is being forced along under provisions of The Endangered Species Act. Biological scientists describe a species as "an actually or potentially interbreeding population of organism." By this definition the Columbia River salmon and steelhead runs involved are not separate species from those fish that spawn in other Northwest rivers. Even if these runs die out their respective species would still remain healthy and would remain a commercially valuable resource from runs spawned in other rivers.

The theory that the decline of Columbia River salmon and steelhead runs is caused primarily by the dams interfering with fish migration is not supported by good scientific evidence. If in fact this were true, then the lack of competition from these runs in salt water habitats would have led to substantial increases in populations spawning in other rivers. This does not seem to be happening and decision makers need to look at other causes for the decline in Pacific Ocean salmon and steelhead populations. Other factors that seem to be involved are: over harvest in both salt and fresh water habitats, the establishment of exotic predators and parasites, and increases in populations of native predators that are currently protected by Federal laws. Historic evidence shows that these runs had declined before the dams in question were built.

The Endangered Species Act is seriously flawed. There are no provisions for evaluating risks/benefits of actions taken to protect listed species or for compensating people or communities adversely affected by these actions. There is real need for amending this act to include these provisions.

Much of the money supporting arguments for removal of dams on the Columbia River system is being furnished by private energy producers who stand to make significantly more profit from the removal of competition from electricity generated by public-owned dams. These dams are essential to an adequate supply of energy in this area. The substitution of fossil fuel generated energy would produce as much or more damage to the environment and deplete non-renewable energy resources.

Thank you for considering my comments

Sincerely, Bernard R. Sauve

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