

March 24, 2000

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

Re: Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration  
Feasibility Study: Draft Feasibility Report and  
Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Sirs/Madam:

The undersigned national agricultural organizations urge the retention of the four lower Snake River dams subject to the feasibility study.

1 | The importance of the Snake River dams and the entire inland waterways system to the economic health and international competitiveness of U.S. agriculture is well documented. USDA officials have stated that "[b]arge transportation provides U.S. grain shippers a low-cost transportation mode to U.S. ports for export. Barges also provide a low-cost means of moving fertilizer and other agricultural inputs to production regions. Finally, barge transportation provides competition to the nation's railroads, placing downward pressure on rail rates, which is increasingly important as the U.S. rail industry continues to consolidate." (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, **AGRICULTURAL TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: A FRAMEWORK FOR DISCUSSION**, Washington, D.C., 1998.)

Removal of the lower Snake River dams would cause the more than two million tons of farm and forest products moved annually on the Snake River to find alternative modes of transportation to market. These alternative modes would, of course, be more costly than the present method of barge transportation and lead to a decrease in the prices received by the producers for these products. We urge that a realistic assessment of these higher transportation costs be included in any evaluation of the impact of removing the Snake River dams.

2 | Moreover, while some environmental groups urge removal of the lower Snake River dams, their position ignores the substantial environmental advantages of barge transportation. Barges are more energy efficient than either the truck or rail mode for transporting bulk commodities. The cargo capacity of a typical barge on the Snake River

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is 30 times greater than one rail car and 125 times greater than one semi-trailer. To move two million tons of cargo by these alternative modes would mean an additional 22,626 railcars or 93,333 trucks would travel the rails and highways of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana each year. This increased volume of rail and road traffic would lead to more highway damage and vehicle congestion, more air pollution, and more noise pollution throughout the area. We strongly urge that the full economic and environmental costs of this increased traffic be included in any assessment of the impacts of removing the lower Snake River dams.

U.S. agriculture must remain competitive in world markets. The U.S. can ill afford to dismantle our transportation infrastructure as our competitors around the world continue to make significant improvements to their transportation infrastructures to increase their global competitiveness.

While we share the concerns regarding the decline of the Snake River salmon population, we need to look for solutions that preserve and protect the economic health of the region as well.

Sincerely,

**AMERICAN SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION**

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WHEAT GROWERS**

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF FARMER COOPERATIVES**

**NATIONAL CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION**

**NATIONAL GRAIN AND FEED ASSOCIATION**

**U.S. GRAINS COUNCIL**

**U.S. WHEAT ASSOCIATES**

cc: The Honorable George Voinovich, Chairman, Transportation and Infrastructure  
Subcommittee, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee  
The Honorable Sherwood Boehlert, Chairman, Water Resources and Environment  
Subcommittee, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
The Honorable Richard Lugar, Chairman, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee  
The Honorable Larry Combest, Chairman, House Agriculture Committee