

Phone 829-5774
Home Phone 829-5774

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Dear Corp,

In 1967-1969 I lived near and fished the Alsea River in Western Oregon. In the fall we caught salmon and throughout the winter we caught steelhead. Recently, I visited with Kevin Goodson who is the fish biologist with the Oregon Fish and Game Department who is responsible for the Alsea, Siletz and Siuslaw fisheries. He related that Fall Chinook spawning returns are at 50 year highs which is very good. However, the Coho returns to their hatcheries are very low when compared to the time I was there. Two hundred fish return compared to several thousand 30 years ago. The Steelhead numbers have also declined from 12,000 harvested fish by anglers down to one to two thousand. Since these rivers do not have any dams, other factors are responsible for the decline in numbers for the steelhead and coho while the Chinook are faring very well. Kevin suggested several areas they are looking at as solutions to their problems such as habitat, predators-harbor seals were not a problem 30 years ago but are a major problem today, ocean conditions, and hatchery operations. My point is that more than just the Snake River Dams could be the cause of the decline in fish returns to Idaho rivers.

I think there is a solution to the Snake dams that will benefit everyone. Build a new river or canal from Lewiston to Pasco to bypass the 4 dams. The approximately 130 mile stream could be built parallel to the existing river above the current canyon or it could go on a direct route from Lewiston to Pasco. The new stream could carry smolts past the 4 dams in a stream that would be similar to the snake prior to dam construction. Existing water from the Clearwater and the Salmon, Snake Rivers would be sufficient to carry the smolts. A system to divert the smolts into the new river would have to be developed. This river could be constructed in a much shorter time than what it would take to breach the existing dams and fish results would be immediate as compared to the alternatives. I hope you will seriously look into this alternative plan. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Myron Huettig