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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Portland District  
Attn: Lower Snake Study  
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**This comment is in support of breaching the Lower Snake River dams to protect salmon.**

The Flathead Resource Organization (FRO) is a grassroots environmental interest group with some 150 members living in the Lower Flathead River Basin. Ironically, considering the issue at stake in this comment, FRO began as the Flathead River Watch 22 years ago during hydro-electric studies of the Flathead, Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers.

FRO formed in 1978 to understand and provide a hub for public information about potential hydro sites on the three western Montana rivers. These projects were similar to those on the Snake River in that they would have provided some electric power and other benefits. However, it quickly became clear to us and most of the western Montana community that these dams would have far-reaching and long-lasting negative impacts which would overwhelm any benefits.

Believing that the integrity of the environment was at stake, FRO actively opposed further study or development of the sites until, in 1981, Senator John Melcher agreed to kill further appropriations for the project.

Our point here is that the open debate fostered by the Clark Fork-Flathead studies clearly indicated that dams would have been unwise and destructive investments. By nipping study appropriations in the bud, millions of dollars in counter-productive construction appropriations were saved and additional millions required to clean up the mess—which will be the case with the Snake River dams—will never be required.

FRO asks that the invaluable salmon resource of the Columbia River be saved by breaching the dams on the Snake River (Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite), and that the combined and cumulative impacts of other dams on the mainstem Columbia be considered for salmon enhancement modifications.

Further, we would ask that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study its involvement in projects such as the Snake River and Clark Fork/Flathead as models to determine how it can avoid future decisions leading to tragic and costly mistakes. History of these projects shows that these mistakes could have been avoided. In the case of the Snake River dams, short-term, political Pork Barrel gain overwhelmed the common sense of environmental law such as NEPA, as well as the tenets of sound engineering which are the basis of the Corps' existence. On the Clark Fork/Flathead, community vigilance, conscientious public disclosure, and an enlightened congressional delegation combined to avoid the same mistake.

The Corps must understand that it made a mistake on the Snake River and must strive never to let parochial interests overwhelm good judgement again.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely



Pat Hurley  
Vice President

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