

MAR 22 2000

**Testimony of
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Missoula, Montana**

My name is William K. Drummond and I am here representing Western Montana Electric Generating and Transmission Cooperative. WMG&T has seven utility members that serve 95,000 ratepayers in Western Montana. All the members of WMG&T purchase all or the majority of their power from Bonneville Power Administration and have helped pay the \$3 billion that has been spent on salmon recovery over the last 15 years.

Tonight, I am speaking on behalf of six of WMG&T's members. I am not representing Mission Valley Power.

First, we want to offer some compliments.

1. We want to complement the excellent work of the National Marine Fisheries Service on the Cumulative Risk Initiative (CRI).
2. We applaud the recent jeopardy decision on harvest. It is evidence of NMFS' willingness to consider all four Hs.
3. Third, we support the negotiations on biologically based performance standards and think that effort holds great promise.

Our main comments are as follows:

1. We believe the goals for salmon recovery need to be more clear. For example, the controversies between hatchery and wild fish, and the goal of recovery itself – to sustainable or harvestable levels – are still unclear. We need clear goals.

2. The issue is not Dams versus Salmon. The issue is how to recover salmon. We do not support dam breach. It is the most expensive and most biologically uncertain proposal. It would affect only 4 of the 26 listed salmon and steelhead species in the Northwest.

The Hydro Appendix itself indicates at page 63 that dam breach alone is insufficient to adequately reduce the risk of extinction.

The Appendix also notes that transportation has a 98% survival rate (page 11) and that recent research indicates that adults going upstream get through the dams and reservoirs faster than through the free-flowing sections of the river (page 46).

3. Breaching of the four Lower Snake dams would have no impact on the levels of Hungry Horse or Libby reservoirs. First, that water has little impact on the Snake River stocks. It enters the Columbia below the four Lower Snake Dams. Second, the water from these Montana reservoirs is being used for Kootenai River sturgeon and the Mid-Columbia salmon stocks that are unaffected by the Lower Snake dams. Finally, as NMFS' own research has shown, getting smolts downstream is not the problem.

4. We are particularly interested in the results of the CRI analysis I mentioned earlier. Preliminary results, presented to the Northwest Power Planning Council last week, suggest that the best opportunities for improving salmon population trajectories come from survival in the first and second years, but not from changing transportation, increasing dam passage, changing harvest, or improving adult upstream passage. We will be very interested in the final results of this effort.

Salmon recovery will require contributions from all four Hs. We oppose breaching the four Lower Snake dams.

We also support the results Corps of Engineers' John Day Drawdown Phase 1 Study that concludes a drawdown of John Day reservoir would not provide the biological benefits necessary to justify such a drastic measure or, for that matter, further study of the alternative.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.