

OREGON WHEAT

TALKING POINTS OWGL POSITION ON SALMON RECOVERY

- Dam breaching is an alternative with hypothetical, unproven biological benefits. The only "science" supporting dam breaching comes from computer models, not empirical evidence, and those models are wholly dependent on the assumptions, formulas, and parameters that the modellers choose. NMFS' latest science, the Cumulative Risk Initiative (CRI), estimates moderate benefits to fall chinook and steelhead and slight benefits for spring/summer chinook from dam breaching. (Source: *Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration Study — Newsletter #8*). The older PATH model made some heroic assumptions about delayed mortality, which have been broadly questioned, and had other procedural problems. However, both models are subject to a high degree of uncertainty due to poor scientific data (*Improving Salmon Passage — summary of the Corps' lower Snake River EIS*).
- Dam breaching poses severe economic consequences.
 - **Hydropower:** \$251-291 million per year in higher power costs to the region. There are also unresolved questions about reliability of the power grid by taking the lower Snake dams offline.
 - **Navigation:** The DREW report estimates \$24 million in annual additional cost; but they have missed the boat on a number of key issues. Assumptions of rate impacts with the loss of barge competition, the cost of building new roads and maintaining existing ones, the cost of additional rail capacity, and costs associated with port congestion at terminals have all been ignored. The actual cost impact is probably 2-3 times the Corps estimate.
 - **Irrigation:** Pump intakes would have to be extended to reach the lower river level. Wells adjacent to the river would have to be modified. These costs together amount of \$15.4 million in added annual costs. (Corps EIS summary document).
 - **Recreation:** Breaching advocates tell you that there are \$5 billion increases in recreation benefits associated with breaching. What they don't tell you is that to reach those numbers, the number of people visiting the lower Snake River would have to increase by 79 times over today's total, and a significant share of those people have to drive to the lower Snake from California; an unlikely prospect. Advocates also gloss over the impacts to existing recreation resources on the lower Snake; the 1992 experimental drawdown on only one of the Snake River pools caused over \$2 million in property damage to docks, marinas, roads, and structures along the river.
 - **Breaching costs:** The cost of removing the earthen embankments at each of the dams will run between \$800 million and \$1.2 billion dollars, according to Corps of Engineers preliminary estimates.
- Dam breaching poses some negative environmental consequences.
 - **Replacement generation** (gas, coal, nuclear) all generate higher particulate emissions than does hydropower, which impact air quality.
 - **Alternative transportation modes** (truck and rail) use more fuel and emit more particulates per ton of commodity shipped than does barge transportation.
 - **Water quality:** It could take more than 10 years for the accumulated silts behind the dams to fully wash out from the river. The Corps estimates 50-75 million cubic yards of sediment could be

washed downstream. Conditions under a breaching scenario will actually be worse for fish at the outset than what we're doing today. Smaller volumes of water in the river would also concentrate contaminants and predators, as well as provide less diffusion capacity to dissipate heat in the hot, dry summer months.

○ Procedural problems with the Drawdown Regional Economic Workgroup (DREW) affect the reliability and accuracy of some sections of the report.

- 1 ● The Navigation report assumes that new grain loading facilities and new railways or roads will spring into existence without a discernable cost to the region. It assumes that rail rates will not increase when barge competition is removed from the freight picture — an absurd assumption. Rail rates are based on what the market will bear, and are held in check in the PNW by the presence of barge transportation. Corps economists also assumed that the even if transportation costs increase dramatically because of breaching, that the same quantity of grain would be produced on the same acreage as is presently produced. The only way this happens is if the farmland is recapitalized at a lower rate (loses value), and the DREW analysis makes no allowance for this loss of value.
- 2 ● Third-party consultants were hired to write every section of the DREW report except one; the Tribal Circumstances report. The Tribal report was written by a consultant to the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission (CRITFC). While no one argues the tribes' right to tell their story, wheat farmers and other interests on the river had no control and often very little input into how our story was told. That is one reason the Navigation report has so many flaws.

○ What should be the role of church organizations in this debate? Several denominations have held meetings or published papers on the subject. If their involvement fosters fish as a religious icon, they should carefully compare that objective to scriptural guidance. It's one thing to defend religious freedom, but something else to advocate worship of the creation rather than the Creator.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. Romans 1:22-25.