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Brigadier General Carl A. Strock

As a young man I worked for the Forest Service on the Boise National Forest as a forest tech/fire fighter. The guard station where I worked and lived was named Elk Creek in Bear Valley. It just so happened that one of the furthest migration of pacific salmon was in "Elk Creek, Bear Valley Creek, & Marsh Creek", the five summers spent in Bear Valley I saw the number of returning salmon decrease each year. We would drive down to Dagger Falls, near the headwaters of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River and watch the Chinook salmon fight the rushing water to start the cycle of life again. At the time I did not understand the scope of the problem or the number of factors involved. What I did understand was that soon the rivers that were once full of wild salmon would soon be empty if some thing does not change.

After writing many term papers, listening to many speakers, and reading many articles about the survival of the salmon I have come to one major conclusion, dam removal must be the centerpiece of any option chosen to recover Snake River salmon. Teams of federal, tribal, state and independent scientists found that the best option to recover all species of salmon and steelhead on the Snake River is to remove the four lower Snake River dams.

I know that such a decision must not be based upon science alone. Of course there are economic and social factors which come in to play. I beg you to take a further look into the economic costs to the region of keeping the dams.

Below are the major points of emphasis, which need to be considered:

- Laws and treaties mandate that Snake River salmon must be saved. Letting the fish go extinct would be the most expensive option of all, potentially costing taxpayers tens of billions of dollars in reparation to Columbia Basin Indian tribes.
- A restored salmon and steelhead fishery would be worth hundreds of millions of dollars a year to hard-pressed river communities like Riggins, Orofino, Salmon and Stanley.
- Dam removal is the cheapest option of the table. Alternatives to dam removal include increasing flow augmentation from southern Idaho, further restricting logging, mining and grazing, and eliminating Idaho's multi million dollar a year steelhead fishery.
- Bypassing the lower Snake dams will eliminate the need for additional water from southern Idaho, which could dry up 650,000 acres of irrigated cropland and cost $430 million a year in losses to Idaho farmers.
- Any recovery plan that does not include dam removal also would require an estimated $125,000 million a year to bring the lower Snake River dams and reservoirs into compliance the federal Clean Water Act.

Please do not allow incidental killings of this magnificent threatened and endangered species. When making decisions with such impact remember the people who depend on these fish for their livelihood, for recreation, and the pure pleasure that the existence of this extraordinary spices.

In conclusion I will leave you with a quote from Ann Badgley, assistant regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Portland.

"For native fish and wildlife species, a free-flowing river is better than a dammed-up river."

Sincerely,

Jon W. Vestal Jr.