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26 April 2000

US Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District
Attn: Lower Snake River Study
210 North Third Avenue
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Dear Federal Salmon Managers:

On behalf of more than 400,000 members, Defenders of Wildlife strongly supports the removal of the four Lower Snake River Dams (Alternative 4) as described in the *Draft Lower Snake River Salmon Migration Feasibility Report* and *Draft Environmental Impact Statement* by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Snake River once produced half of the salmon and steelhead in the entire Columbia River basin. Since completion of the four lower Snake River dams in 1975, salmon stocks in that tributary have plummeted towards both biological and economic extinction. Removing the Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Lower Granite, and Little Goose Dams is a necessary and effective first step towards preventing extinction and encouraging recovery of the four endangered salmon and steelhead species in the Snake River.

Please consider the following points:

* **Importance of Salmon** - Recent scientific papers have documented the importance of returning salmon as a nutrient source responsible for returning key ocean minerals and organic matter back into riparian ecosystems. Salmon serve as an essential component of marine and river food webs. More than 22 different animals feed on salmon throughout the fish's life cycle. Such animals include threatened grizzly bears, orcas and bald eagles. Salmon have provided a foundation for the regional economy for centuries and the cultural history of the Pacific Northwest is inextricably tied to salmon.

* **Dams Block Salmon Migration** - Snake River dams kill salmon by delaying the migration of young salmon to the sea, by increasing their exposure to predation, disease, and elevated water temperatures, by injury in turbines or other bypass structures and by creating obstacles to adult salmon returning to spawn.

* **Science Supports Dam Removal** - Studies by the National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State and Tribal fisheries agencies and independent scientific committees have all reached the same conclusion -- dam removal is one necessary cornerstone of Snake River salmon recovery strategy.

* **Dam Removal Will Create New Jobs** - Experts say that restoring 140 miles of the Lower Snake River to pre-dam conditions would create more than 3,100 recreation-related jobs and generate more than \$200 million in annual economic benefits.

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*** The Benefits Provided by the Dams Can be Replaced** - By investing in transportation systems improvement, reforming irrigation equipment and building new sources of clean power, we can replace the benefits now provided by the dams.

*** Dam Removal may be Necessary to meet Treaty Obligations** - Honoring the treaties with the Native American tribes is now being recognized as the fifth "H" in salmon recovery. If the dams are not removed and the Snake River stocks go extinct, abrogation of the treaty trust obligations may cost the American public \$10 Billion in reparations to the Nez Perce and Umatilla tribes.

While other factors such as habitat and harvest also need to be addressed for salmon to be fully restored, dam removal is an essential first step. Thank you for consideration of our comments and for extending the deadline for comment submission.

Sincerely,

Gerald A. Ring Erickson, Ph.D.
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Defenders of Wildlife

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