

March 23, 2000

Dear *Secretary Babbitt*

Science and logic have not yet been used in the Lower Snake River Salmon and Dam issue. First, we have to determine if there is a problem. Then, if there is a problem, identify it and then fix it. If the problem cannot be fixed, then and only then, should removing the dams be considered as an option.

I attended most of the recent Corps of Engineers meetings on the subject and I heard a lot of people saying, just install Fish Friendly Turbines and leave the fish in the river where they belong!

This is the logical thing to do, but the action agencies involved know that solving the "problem" would cut off their funding, so it is not likely to be one of their recommended options. The name of the game is to spend as much money as possible to keep the "wild" Chinook on the brink of extinction and then spend even more pretending to fix the "problem." It should be called "funding recovery" not "salmon recovery."

Chinook and Steelhead numbers have actually been steadily increasing in the Columbia and Snake Rivers since they first started counting fish at Rock Island Dam in 1933. The National Marine Fisheries Service claims that "wild" Chinook numbers are down. They classify a fish as "wild" if it spawns outside the fish farm for two generations. Other than that, they can only tell by the clipped fins.

I believe that it is possible to fix the problems that exist so that we can have both fish and dams. Here is my list of the top 20 problems in the Columbia and Snake River system and my solutions for each:

- 1, 2 | #20 **Dredging:** On February 27, 1992 the Walla Walla Army Corps dredged up all of the wild Chinook redds below Lower Monumental Dam and dumped the newly emerged fry on the riverbanks to die. Instead of dredging up spawning beds, they should be placing more gravel for spawning.
- 1, 2 | #19 **Obsolete Turbines:** The existing Kaplan turbines were designed over 90 years ago. New Fish Friendly turbines have been installed and proven to reduce mortality to less than 1%, while increasing power output with less water. They should be installed in all dams.
- #18 **Pollution:** There is still too much pollution from the pulp mills, mines and farm chemical runoff. We should reduce the use of harmful chemicals and build better waste treatment plants.
- #17 **Natural Predators:** The overabundance of hatchery fish has caused an explosion of predator populations. We should raise the smolts to have better survival skills and control the predator population. Quit wasting money on eradicating the squawfish, which are scavengers.
- 3, 4 | #16 **Operation of Fish Ladders:** Fish ladders are dewatered too early, when the Coho are still running. Some ladders should be modified and trash should be removed more often from the upstream end.

- 5, 6 | #15 **Operation of Turbines:** They should be operated to best efficiency to prevent cavitation and injury to fish.
- #14 **Straying Fish:** Transported fish tend to stray more. Instead of being clubbed to death, they should be returned to their proper spawning place.
- 7 | #13 **Fall Backs:** More should be done to prevent the migrating adults from falling back down the spillways. A guiding system should be installed to guide them away from the spillway, and spilling should be used only when there is excessive water.
- 8 | #12 **Turbidity:** Muddy water from spring floods should be better controlled by buffer zones and no-till cultivation. Also storage dams and settling ponds should be implemented.
- #11 **Degradation of Spawning Beds:** Some streams have been turned into canals. Make them as natural as possible. Leave a buffer zone of tall trees, timely release of cold storage water, replace gravel, seed clouds for more water, and stop human activity on the beds such as harassing and spearing the fish.
- #10 **Fish Biologists:** Biologists conduct far too many useless experiments. Their excessive handling and tagging causes many of the fish to die from stress and disease. They should just leave the fish in the river.
- 9 | #9 **Dam Maintenance:** Corps maintenance is getting better, but trash removal and cavitation repair is still too slow. Cavitation repair should be conducted every two years instead of four.
- #8 **Exotic Predators:** The Fish and Game Department should quit planting exotic predators in the rivers. Anglers should be encouraged to catch all of the bass, walleye and catfish that they can eat.
- 10 | #7 **Fish Hatcheries:** NMFS says that the production of over 20 million farm fish per year is polluting the gene pool of the wild fish. We should cut hatchery production by 50% and use the remaining hatcheries to produce wild fish to be released in streams.
- 11, 12 | #6 **Flip Lips and Excessive Spills:** The million dollar flip lips increase fish mortality by 600% by shooting the smolts into the back roll after descaling them. The stunned fish are then devoured by flocks of seagulls. Excessive spill confuses adult salmon and saturates the water with deadly nitrogen gas.
- #5 **Fish Barges and Trucks:** Transported fish have diminished survival and homing skills. They are highly stressed, starved, and exposed to diseases. Fish left in the river and run through the turbines have a much higher survival and return rate than transported fish. Eliminate expensive transportation of smolts.

- #4 Bypass Systems and Holding Tanks:** Bypass systems descale and injure the stressed-out fish before they are subjected to torture by the biologists, then placed in a warm, disease-ridden tank to wait for two or three days for a barge. Keeping the fish in the river would save hundreds of millions of dollars and increase survival.
- #3 Turbine Intake Fish Screens:** Smolts slam into the screens at ten feet per second, tail first, then shoot upward 50 to 70 feet, and then are flushed down a pipe. All of them are injured in some way. Fish screen mortality is usually ten times higher than the turbines. The screens also cause turbulence and vibrations that reduce efficiency and cause generators to short out. All screens should be removed as soon as possible.
- #2 Tribal Gill Nets:** When the 700 gill nets are in place, every salmon comes in contact with them. They are killed, injured, or delayed too long to spawn. The number of salmon that enter the Snake River is directly proportional to the number that escape the nets.
- #1 Dams with No Ladders:** Sixteen thousand miles of spawning habitat was blocked off in the Snake and Columbia Rivers by dams built with no ladders. The dams should all be fitted with ladders. That includes some dams on irrigation runoff streams that could be turned into prime spawning habitat.

All of these problems should be addressed and fixed before ever thinking about breaching. If your car has a flat tire, the Corps would probably say, "Put on chrome bumpers. If that doesn't work, add more chrome. If that still doesn't fix the tire, then junk out the car." That is what they are doing with the dams. If the turbines have a problem, then fix the turbines. Don't hang a lot of gold-plated junk on the dams and talk about junking the dams out. Again, take advice from the common sense people who testified at your hearings. Just fix the turbines and leave the fish in the river where they belong.

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