



April 25, 2000

Mr. Rick Itami
National Marine Fisheries Service
% Bonneville Power Administration -PL
707 W. Main Street, Suite 500
Spokane, WA 99201

Dear Mr. Itami:

The River Cities Chamber of Commerce, on behalf of the business community of the greater Kelso/Longview (WA) area, would like to express our opposition to the proposed removal or breaching of the Lower Snake River dams. While we are proud of our Northwest heritage and strongly committed to adequately preserving our natural resources, we believe the proposal to remove dams is flawed in many respects.

Removing, or breaching, the dams may actually cause greater damage to the environment than the present situation. Loss of barge traffic will result in much less fuel efficient methods of transportation, such as rail and truck (one typical four barge tow is the equivalent of 140 rail cars or 560 semis). The loss of electrical generation would need to be replaced by coal and gas fired plants, which add further to the increased fossil fuel emissions in the Northwest. Some scientists contend that ecological changes brought about by the dams cannot be easily reversed and that dam removal would sacrifice non-listed species with little potential for recovering those that are listed.

There is no clear scientific basis for dam removal. Numerous examples exist to demonstrate that healthy salmon populations can co-exist with dams, and that low populations occur in waterways without dams. There is ample evidence that barging of salmon and steelhead is successful in moving smolts (juvenile fish) below the dams. Improvements in dam bypass systems and collections systems can make them even more so. The argument that barging has failed ignores the fact that nearly all of the transported smolt survive their journey. What happens between their release below the dams and their return is still a mystery, but one that dam removal is unlikely to solve.

River conditions are just one of the many factors affecting salmon during their lifecycle. Ocean conditions and ocean harvest, in-river harvest, in-river predation and predation by ocean-dwelling predators (such as sea lion and terns, which are also listed) are major factors that are over-looked or simply ignored. All of these factors must be considered if recovery is to be successful.

Removal, or breaching, of the dams will cause drastic damage to the economies of the region. It is a risky experiment that could sacrifice thousands of jobs, cost billions in capital costs and result in little or no benefit for listed salmon species.

We urge you to oppose removal, or breaching, of the Snake River dams.

Sincerely,



Scott Smerdon, President
River Cities Chamber of Commerce

Cc
Association of Washington Business
Senator Slade Gorton
Senator Patty Murray
Representative Brian Baird