



The Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon  
Migration Feasibility Report/  
Environmental Impact Statement



# Community-Based Impact Assessments

## Information on community- based impact assessments

*The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) continues to study ways to improve juvenile salmon passage through the hydropower system on the Snake River. As part of this effort the Corps released the Draft Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration Feasibility Report/Environmental Impact Statement (FR/EIS) in December 1999. These information sheets discuss specific topics covered in the FR/EIS. The entire FR/EIS can be found on line at <http://www.nww.usace.army.mil>. For more information contact Dave Dankel, Walla Walla District Corps, at (509) 527-7288, [dave.a.dankel@nww01.usace.army.mil](mailto:dave.a.dankel@nww01.usace.army.mil).*

## Goal of Community Forums

The primary purpose of the community forums was to obtain structured public input on the alternatives prior to selection of a preferred alternative in the FR/EIS. The Corps recognized the importance of understanding how a range of citizens throughout the region believe the alternatives would affect their specific community—both positively and negatively. Another study, the social analysis, provides a different but complementary approach to community impact assessment. (The social analysis is discussed in the Social Analysis information sheet and in section 5.13 of the FR/EIS)

## Setting up the Forums

Social scientists from the University of Idaho were contracted to conduct the forums for the community-based assessments in two phases. Phase I was conducted throughout the winter of 1999, attracting a total of 877 people including communities within a 100-mile radius from the lower Snake River. Phase II was conducted in June 1999 and included 277 participants from communities in southern Idaho.

The forums were designed to ensure participation by a range of individuals in communities throughout southeastern Washington, northeastern Oregon, and central and southern Idaho. Communities were selected to reflect the diversity of towns and cities within this region, based on population size, economic diversity, dominant industry, relationship to the river, and geographic location. In addition, University of Idaho researchers worked to ensure diverse perspectives were presented at each community forum by inviting local citizens with varied backgrounds. However, the forums were open to participation by all residents of each community.

## The Forum Process

During the 4-hour workshops, participants assessed their communities' current situations by thinking about major dimensions of community (social make-up, economy, community character, and community organization and leadership). Using the latest research on the social, economic, and biological effects of each of the study alternatives, community participants engaged in a structured interactive process to identify likely social, cultural, and economic impacts to their communities, as well as ways to minimize any negative impacts.



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### General Community Perspectives

As part of the assessment, communities were categorized according to common characteristics. These categories were used to better understand the range of communities found in the region and the variations in the potential social impacts they perceived if the proposed alternatives for salmon recovery were implemented.

### Agricultural Communities

Participants in agricultural communities in Washington state perceived the impacts of the dam breaching alternative on their communities to be the most severe and adverse due to an increase in transportation costs and utility rates. Dryland agricultural communities, including those in the Palouse, the Columbia Basin, southeastern Washington, and northcentral Idaho, perceived the most negative impacts associated with dam breaching.

### Urban Trade Center Communities

Participants in cities closest to the lower Snake River (Kennewick, Pasco, Lewiston, and Clarkston) perceived the impacts of dam breaching to be the most severe due to job loss, increased utility rates, changing recreational opportunities, increased traffic congestion, and an increase in public assistance.

In contrast to the cities closest to the lower Snake River, participants in cities in Southern Idaho (Boise and Twin Falls) generally perceived the character of their communities and the region to be negatively affected if declines in wild salmon runs continued. These participants perceived a variety of benefits associated with dam breaching, such as an increase in recreational opportunities and a general optimism for the future.

### Downriver Communities

Participants in farming communities in the downriver region closer to the Columbia River (Adams, Stanfield, and Umatilla), perceived the impacts of dam breaching to be adverse due to an increase in transportation costs and utility rates. However, these participants appeared not to be assessing direct, local impacts as much as

focusing on antipathy towards the Federal government and concerns over a domino effect of dam breaching extending to the Columbia River.

### Upriver Communities

Participants in agriculturally-based communities in the upriver region of southern Idaho saw dam breaching as more likely to create adverse community effects than did participants in forums in other upriver communities. These other upriver communities, which included the Middle Snake River irrigated agriculture-type towns of Firth, Hagerman, Homedale, and Rupert, viewed themselves as less affected by direct salmon recovery issues than by indirect effects such as increased costs of doing business.

### Multiple Natural Resource Use Communities

Participants in multiple natural resource use communities (agriculture, timber, recreation, tourism) in the upriver region of central Idaho and northeastern Oregon (Enterprise, Orofino, and Weippe) see themselves affected less by direct salmon recovery actions on the Snake River than by indirect effects such as increased utility and transportation costs, and the potential loss of irrigation water. Similar results were found in the upriver region of southern Idaho (Ashton). In contrast, participants in other multiple natural resource use-type communities in central Idaho that are located on the river and have the most direct relationship to it (Riggins and Salmon) perceived that they were likely to be negatively affected if declines in wild salmon runs continued, and that the impacts of breaching on their communities would be beneficial.

### Forum Results

The community-based impact assessment derived from results of the forums revealed that the perceived benefits and costs of the alternatives varied within each community, between each type of community, and between different types of communities throughout the region. There were common themes, but each community provided a perspective uniquely its own. As a result, no single "one-size-fits-all" set of impacts characterizes all of the communities of any particular type.

