



May 14, 2007

Letters to the Editor
The New York Times
229 W. 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036-3959

To the Editor

Re "On the Snake River, Dam's Natural Allies Seem to Have a Change of Heart" (US News, May 13)

It is simply not credible to claim that breaching the four Snake River dams will solve endangered fish problems in the Pacific Northwest, improve the environment or be good for the economy. Twenty-six fish runs from northern California to the Canadian border are listed as threatened or endangered. Only four pass the Snake River dams. Thirteen don't pass any dams at all.

These dams are not driving fish runs to extinction. The federal agencies responsible for fish under the Endangered Species Act say that juvenile fish survival past the dams is as high today as it was before the dams were built. Adult fish returns over the last ten years have been higher than at any time since the first dam was built on the river system in 1938.

These dams produce energy every day with zero air emissions. Replacing their 3,000 megawatt capacity would require six coal or 14 gas-fired power plants. Those replacement plants would contribute millions of tons of emissions to global warming.

Wind and solar power alone are not alternatives to hydropower. Hydropower has peaking capacity to generate energy any time it is needed, even if the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining. Even with added wind and solar power, if the dams come out, the new gas and coal plants would still be needed to meet peak demand.

Barge navigation, which is provided by locks at these dams, is the most fuel efficient, least polluting transportation mode for moving millions of tons of U.S. products to export markets. Eliminating barge transportation would put 700,000 more trucks on the highway, adding congestion, burning more fuel, increasing air pollution, and contributing to global warming. The region's rail lines are already near capacity and unable to accommodate the significant amount of goods that are shipped by U.S. farmers on the Columbia Snake River System.

The four Snake River dams provide real environmental and economic benefits to the Pacific Northwest and the nation, and it is important that these benefits are thoughtfully considered when weighing in on what is best for our region.

Sincerely,

Glenn Vanselow
Executive Director

cc: Northwest Congressional delegation (OR/WA/ID/MT/CA)
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