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Pacific Northwest Waterways Association weighs in on Snake River stakeholder process

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) is weighing in on the Lower Snake River Dams Stakeholder Process draft report commissioned by the Washington State Governor’s Office, funded by the State Legislature, and made available today for public review and comment. This dam breaching report was one of the more controversial recommendations from the Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force, and did not have unanimous support from the group.

“This draft report on the Lower Snake River Dams Stakeholder Process was produced with Washington taxpayer funding, which could have gone toward activities that directly benefit salmon and orcas. While we appreciate the diligence of the consultants leading this process in reaching out to PNWA members and other stakeholders, the product that was commissioned by the State is essentially a status report of river operations followed by a survey of opinions – not science-based salmon recovery,” said Kristin Meira, executive director for PNWA.

“Federal agencies are already studying salmon and the river system and will have a draft report for the region to review in February. This Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement is based in science, complies with National Environmental Policy Act, and includes opportunities for citizen review as well as significant collaboration with cooperating agencies like Northwest tribes and states – including the State of Washington,” said Meira. “The CRSO EIS will include an evaluation of the Snake River dams, including an economic impact analysis with stakeholder input.”

As conversations continue in the region and the federal study process moves forward, PNWA's members will continue to support clean renewable hydropower, efficient barge transportation, and science-based salmon recovery.

Did you know?

Each Snake River dam has a navigation lock that allows cargo to move by water. The Snake River has had remarkably stable tonnage levels in the past 10 years. In 2017 alone, over 3.5 million tons of cargo were barged on the Snake River. It would have taken over 35,140 rail cars to carry this cargo, or over 135,000 semi-trucks. The Snake River is particularly important to our Northwest wheat farmers. The Snake River dams make it possible for nearly 10% of all U.S. wheat exports to move in the safest, lowest emission type of cargo transportation – barging.

Hydropower is a reliable, renewable domestic power source that produces no greenhouse gas emissions and provides nearly 60% of our region's electricity. The Snake River dams are key contributors to the Northwest energy profile, and make it possible for intermittent renewables like wind and solar to integrate into our system. The lower Snake River dams are some of the most reliable and lowest-cost electricity sources of the 31 federal dams from which the Bonneville Power Administration markets power.

Salmon recovery in the Pacific Northwest is a collaborative effort by federal and state agencies, tribes, utilities, and countless other entities. Together we all work to address the many ways a salmon's life cycle can be affected by humans: Hydropower, hatcheries, habitat, and harvest. Ocean conditions also play a major role in salmon health, in addition to significant impact from predators like birds, sea lions, and other fish. Major improvements have been made in fish ladders, dam design, optimized river flow and habitat restoration, resulting in steady improvements to salmon runs. Juvenile fish survival rates past each of the eight federal dams are now between 95 and 98 percent.

The [Pacific Northwest Waterways Association](#) is a non-profit trade association of ports, businesses, public agencies and individuals who support navigation, energy, trade and economic development throughout the Pacific Northwest.