



## PACIFIC NORTHWEST WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **PNWA reacts to Inslee, Murray proposal to study Lower Snake River dam breaching**

**PORTLAND, Ore.** – The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association has reviewed a joint statement by Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D, WA), in which they announced a plan to create a new process to determine whether there are reasonable means for replacing the benefits provided by the Lower Snake River Dams.

PNWA completely agrees with the Governor's and Senator's statement that salmon are essential to Washington state's economy and cultural heritage. However, we are concerned that their narrow focus on four federal dams with outstanding fish passage and benefits to the entire region and nation fails to place the salmon recovery discussion into proper context.

***The four lower Snake River dams are federal projects that provide benefits far beyond the borders of Washington state.***

The lower Snake River is part of a larger hydropower, irrigation and transportation system that provides direct benefits to Montana, Idaho, Oregon and beyond; direct and indirect benefits across the Midwest, Pacific Coast and Southwest regions; and worldwide benefits to our nation and its trading partners in Asia and elsewhere.

In 2020, federal government experts completed a \$40 million, multi-year analysis of this system, with consultations by federal natural resource agencies, states and Tribal entities, and input from the public. The conclusion of that extensive study was that breaching the dams is not in the best interest of society from climate, cost and societal benefits perspectives, especially given the highly uncertain benefits for salmon.

***Barging on the Columbia Snake River System is a critical part of efforts to fight climate change through decarbonization.***

The UN's Code Red for Humanity makes it clear we are behind in our decarbonization goals as a country and a planet. We agreed with Governor Inslee when he noted the extreme danger that the warming, acidifying ocean represents to salmon populations, and the need to fight climate change to reverse this existential oceanic threat.

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Removing the lower Snake River dams would be a significant setback to our region's aggressive and laudable decarbonization and electrification goals. From a transportation perspective alone, moving commodity flows from barge to truck and rail will result in increases in CO2 and other harmful emissions by over 1.25 million tons per year, equivalent to cumulative emissions created by a coal-fired power plant every 5-6 years. In just 2019, it would have taken over 39,000 rail cars or 150,000 semi-trucks to move the cargo that was barged on the Snake River.

***Focusing on four run of river dams with world class fish passage ignores the broader salmon crisis.***

Recent news from Alaska, Canada, and our own Washington coast and river systems clearly shows that salmon populations throughout the region - including on undammed rivers with pristine habitat - are plummeting.

Meanwhile the lower Snake River dams are "run of river," do not block fish, and in fact have outstanding fish passage rates. Some lower Snake River salmon populations are expanding to the point where states are opening fishing seasons for the first time in 100 years, and orca populations outside of Washington's three Puget Sound resident pods are thriving.

***We applaud science-based efforts to understand and solve true salmon recovery issues.***

Multiple groups and studies convened by federal and state elected officials and agencies – including several led by the Washington State governor's office itself - have all concluded that the certain costs of breaching the lower Snake River dams significantly outweigh the highly speculative benefits to salmon and orca.

Meanwhile, continued study and implementation of habitat restoration, pollution and predator management, and advanced fish passage solutions have shown real gains. This is the work we believe will support salmon recovery, not the removal of these dams, which have juvenile fish passage rates of 95% or better. We must improve conditions for salmon throughout the Northwest and throughout their life cycle if we are to truly support these species.

We appreciate the work of the many Members of Congress from Washington and other states who have led efforts to authorize and fund such work.

***We need true regional collaboration.***

NOAA Fisheries started a conversation with its [Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force](#) to evaluate all Northwest runs, set goals for recovery, and highlight the multitude of actions that it will take to help our fish. Discussions are now happening about the best way to continue that good work, including [other regional collaborative efforts](#) proposed by Gov. Inslee and his three fellow Pacific Northwest governors. PNWA encourages Gov. Inslee, Sen. Murray and other parties in the Northwest to reject extreme and narrow approaches like Snake River dam breaching, and collaborate to help our region's salmon in every part of their life cycle.

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*The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association is a non-profit, non-partisan trade association of ports, businesses, public agencies and individuals who support navigation, energy, trade and economic development throughout the region. Learn more at [www.pnwa.net](http://www.pnwa.net).*