

April 17th, 2017

Nez Perce County Board of County Commissioners  
1225 Idaho Street, PO Box 896  
Lewiston, Idaho 83501-0896

Re: Comments to the US Army Corps of Engineers for the CRSO EIS

Dear Sirs,

I read with interest your comments submitted to the US Army Corps of Engineers for the Columbia River Systems Operation process on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. You declared your opposition to breaching the four lower Snake River dams due to socio-economic issues that would affect the citizens of Nez Perce County. While I agree that there would be negative aspects of breaching, they appear to be greatly outweighed by the benefits of breaching. I have to wonder if you considered the benefits and weighed them against the negatives. I think if you did, you would see that Nez Perce County would be far better off without the dams than with them.

One of the major benefits of breaching the dams and lowering the reservoirs is the potential to develop a thriving riverfront in downtown Lewiston. The 30 foot high levee walls that are necessary to hold back Lower Granite "Lake", block an amazing view of two great free flowing rivers. You can see the City of Lewiston's desire to do this in their Waterfront Future Planning graphics. This development is something that could change the whole dynamic of downtown, turning it from a dreary industrial look to a beautiful, vibrant community that enhances our towns' quality of life and attracts new residents.

With the dams down and the levees no longer needed, Lewiston could add beaches (as it once had) and possibly a whitewater park (or two), as there are rapids beneath those stagnant waters. Both have the potential to draw in millions of dollars per year of positive economic impact. One only has to look south to Boise to see what a riverfront can do for a city. The Boise River is a key component in local growth and has provided incredible benefits to residents and local businesses. Residents live, float, fish, kayak, surf, bike, run, walk or just hang out along the river. In addition, every year many moneymaking and civic events are held along the river.

Another major benefit that Nez Perce County could gain is increased tourism, made possible by 140 additional miles of free flowing, shallow, narrow Snake River, perfect for the jet boats that the Lewis-Clark Valley is so famous for manufacturing. One could potentially take a jet boat from the Tri-cities on the Columbia all the way into the heart of Idaho's wilderness. And Lewiston's new waterfront would be a great stopping-off point along the way. The increase in jet boat "habitat" could also drive further jet boat sales in the area, which would benefit the manufacturing sector. Lewiston would become the starting point for 140 mile long float trips all the way to the Columbia River through the once scenic, but now flooded, Snake River canyon white water. And that canyon would once again be teeming with wildlife in its riparian areas as it once was. This is yet another potential benefit for local outdoor enthusiasts.

Lastly, breaching the lower Snake River dams would cause an immediate improvement in salmon and steelhead survival. For decades, the mortality rate for smolts traveling from Lewiston to the Columbia River has hovered around 30% with no improvement, despite nearly a billion dollars expended in fish passage improvements. Breaching provides the best chance of preventing the extinction of the four ESA listed species of salmon and steelhead, which is still a very real possibility. A study of the 2001

fishing season found that Lewiston benefited from direct and indirect angler spending of \$8.8 million per year. A 2005 study predicted that should the salmon and steelhead recover, which the US Army Corps predicted breaching would have the best possibility of doing, Lewiston could see economic returns of \$52 million per year. The whole state of Idaho could see \$544 million in fishing-related expenditures (vs. only \$90 million in 2001). This could be critical to assisting Idaho river communities upstream of Lewiston that rely on fishing and recreation, and have been suffering through rapidly declining fish returns. The 2017 steelhead season is now predicted to be the worst in nearly 20 years. If recovery of salmon and steelhead were taking place, this would not be the case.

The negatives that you mentioned are fairly minor in comparison to the positives that Nez Perce County and the State of Idaho could experience.

- Transportation on the slack water has continued to decline, yet millions of dollars are still being spent on costly lock maintenance on the dams and dredging of the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers. Goods will still get to market in a cost effective manner without barging. They have been for the past four months during the lock closures. Utilizing rail and truck between Lewiston and the Tri-cities, and barges for the rest of the journey down the Columbia River would provide more jobs for Lewiston.
- Hydropower from the four lower Snake River dams is some of the most expensive in the Columbia River hydrosystem, due to nearly a billion dollars in fish mitigation spending intended to keep all the Snake River salmon and steelhead from going extinct. Electricity rates potentially could go down, if the dams were breached and the salmon recovered.
- Infrastructure damage from breaching can be minimized by a slower drawdown than what was done in 1992. In addition, lowering the reservoir would minimize the flood risk to Lewiston that is caused by the reservoir that makes the Port of Lewiston possible. With the dams breached, little if any dredging would be required in the future.

I invite you to think about the potential revitalization of Nez Perce County that could be achieved by breaching the four lower Snake River dams, instead of supporting the status-quo that seems to be promoting stagnation and preventing the local economy from realizing the potential growth that a beautiful, thriving waterfront could provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Twa', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Twa  
Boise, ID