

December 11, 2018

Dear OSA partners,

I brought the orca/salmon connection to the attention of SOS in 2008, after seeing in the ESA language at both the state and federal levels that "Perhaps the single greatest change in food availability for resident killer whales since the late 1800s has been the decline of salmon in the Columbia River basin." I told SOS that the decline and possible extinction of this treasured population of orcas would be a powerful motivator to breach the Snake River dams. That connection is what led to the OSA ten years later.

We are now at the precipice of the extinction of Southern Resident orcas, due primarily to food scarcity. Almost nothing can be done to prevent their disappearance forever, despite even the combined effect of all the restoration efforts recommended by the OTF.

However, in a strictly biological assessment, putting aside for a moment our beliefs or loyalties, there is one action that could possibly provide enough sustenance for their survival into coming decades: immediate breaching of the berms alongside the 4 Snake River dams. Formation of another study group, or reliance on the new NEPA process, guarantees the extinction of So. Resident orcas.

Below are the realities and benefits of breaching the Snake River dams. Southern Resident orcas desperately need those salmon now, which is reason enough to breach, but the pro-dam lobby has been spinning misinformation for 75 years to get the dams built and to justify them ever since, against the fervent objections of residents, tribes and fisheries biologists, and has convinced the public that it's impossible in the short term and not needed. So it's important to know breaching immediately is entirely possible and needed and there's no supportable reason not to breach.

Breaching the Snake River dams immediately is possible and will provide the following benefits:

1. Each dam breached will result in about 1/2 million more adult fall and spring, wild and hatchery Chinook in orca habitat within 18 months, a substantial addition. Breaching all four dams will take 2 years, so within 2-3 years about 1-2 million more adult Chinook will become available, likely preventing extinction of So. Resident orcas;
2. Breaching is within the authority of the Army Corps of Engineers and could begin within 2-3 months of the decision to breach;
3. The Corps NW Div. claiming need for congressional authorization is based on a regulation that deals with changing the purpose or expanding the scope of a project, not with placing a project into a non-operational status;
4. New economic growth will occur in agriculture by reclaiming 10,000 acres of rich bottomland and in new recreation opportunities;
5. Snake River hydropower is surplus so overall production will not change except by reducing expenses, thus reducing BPA's debt and consumer rates;
6. Grain transport on the river will continue to shift to rail with rail improvements covered by funds included in the breach cost funded by BPA;
7. Irrigation will continue and possibly increase with a \$20 million retrofit;
8. 140 miles of mainstem Snake River and 5,500 miles of spawning tributaries will be revitalized by spawning salmon;

9. Hatcheries and restoration projects in the Columbia/Snake basin and in the Salish Sea will continue;
10. Breaching will foster critical resilience in PNW salmon habitat by opening access to wild salmon as we face declines related to climate change;
11. Agencies, companies, and individuals now depending on jobs in dam operations and maintenance will be assisted to transition to new positions;
12. The Army Corps of Engineers and Bonneville Power Administration will save \$100s of millions per year available for more productive projects;
13. So. Resident orcas will have enough Chinook again for improved health and reproductive success.

The voices of the groups and individuals among the membership of the OSA play a critical role in the deliberations of Gov. Inslee and Senators Murray and Cantwell. Declining to advocate immediate breaching of the 4 Snake River dams is inconsistent with your responsibility to act on behalf of So. Resident orcas. On Thursday in Seattle please vote to ask Governor Inslee to strongly urge the Army Corps of Engineers to select Alternative #4 of their 2002 EIS to breach the 4 lower Snake River Dams beginning with a controlled hydraulic breach of the earthen embankment of Lower Granite, then Little Goose dams starting in early 2019. Breaching Lower Granite, the upper of the four dams, could begin any time of year.

Sincerely,

Howard Garrett