

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

April 20, 2020

Subject: Salmon & Orca Recovery in the Time of COVID.

Dear Governor Inslee,

Salmon recovery efforts have always been a pricey but necessary expense for Washington State. Efforts to save the critically endangered Southern Residents will add millions, if not the billion dollars you declared to allocate to the cause last year. Unfortunately, COVID-19 related budget obligations will likely come before the needs of the environment. Direct costs of medical care and unemployment payments will take its toll on the state budget, the situation becoming increasingly acute as we lose revenue from declining sales tax, B&O taxes, and unpaid property taxes etc. For salmon and orca this could not come at a worse time. Species will continue to suffer and face extinction without the increased funding for recovery, *unless* we seriously consider a solution that will cost the state nothing.

You and your staff have been made aware that the four lower Snake River dams (LSRDs) in Eastern Washington kill an estimated 8 million Chinook smolts every year in their attempt to migrate through the four dams and reservoirs. As a large part of the Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) diet, it is well known the survival of these runs is linked to the survival of the SRKWs. Restoring the Snake River has been deemed as the best available action for recovering salmon and orca, and our time to do so is running out.

Many marketers of hydropower, even federal agencies, will disregard the failing economic investment of the LSRDs, and would rather increase salmon mitigation measures than consider dam breaching. This is not the solution this uncertain time calls for. In fact, the LSRDs can be breached this year with appropriate pressure on the Army Corps of Engineers, and with no cost to the state. The cost would be borne almost exclusively by Bonneville Power Administration and its ratepayers spread over several states.

Contrary to what agency reports proclaim, the full cost of removing the earthen embankments of the LSRDs (breaching) cost no more than two/three years' worth of operation, maintenance and overhead. Grossly exaggerated mitigation and power replacement costs in the recently released draft EIS paint an unfavorable picture of dam breaching. However, by correcting these costs, and using the 2002 EIS, breaching can be accomplished while having the best interest of farmers, fishermen/women, and recreationists in mind. The ratepayers have been misled to believe their rates will rise with breaching. Industry leaders must stop the use of this fear tactic and explain that what they are paying for the LSRDs now, is greater than BPA's preferred customer price of 36\$MWH. In simpler terms, they are costing more than what they generate. Given the current amount of surplus sales sold at a loss, with energy demand not predicted to increase (BPA's 2020 Resource Program), the non-necessity of the LSRDs is clear. Wind and solar have been

added at twice the capacity of the LSRDs since 2000, with eight times the capacity projected by 2022 in BPA's 2020 Congressional Budget; which is a further indication we can realistically accomplish this adjustment.

This solution has been available since 2002, but given COVID-19 it has never been a better time to support the decision to breach. Given the new draft EIS is so flawed (see attached), its effect will further protract years of litigation and collaboration. We are about to lose forever the foundations of our Pacific Northwest ecosystem; Snake River salmon runs along with the iconic orca. None of the actions taken thus far have shown any benefit to wild chinook and steelhead returns, as well as any increase in the Southern Resident population.

Governor Inslee, your efforts in addressing coronavirus are remarkable, but do not forget what we stand to lose. The opportunity to restore thousands of agricultural related jobs in Eastern Washington, and tribal, commercial, sport and subsistence fishing jobs is also at stake when we need them the most. Breaching the LSRDs will not raise electricity rates *and* will save the state recovery money it can put to better use to protect public health. Most importantly, breaching the lower Snake River dams does not require federal appropriations, it only requires you to make your support known to Corps leadership, LTG Semonite and General Helmlinger. Likewise, to BPA Administrator Elliot Mainzer. You must bring these leaders to action this year, to avoid functional extinction. It is your responsibility to communicate the right thing to do.

We would appreciate recognition of having received this letter and would like to know what action you will take. We are available virtually or otherwise, in our expert capacity, to further discuss this with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

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