



For Immediate Release

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Environmental Impact Statement decision predictable, not the final word.

The conclusion from federal agencies follows the status quo of endangered species recovery for salmon. Two decades since a dam breaching alternative was developed, old dams will remain in place says the report.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration released the Columbia River System Operations Final Environmental Impact Statement on July 31 ("Final EIS"). Breaching the lower Snake River dams is not included in the Final EIS's preferred alternative. This should not come as a surprise. While the U.S. Army Corps has -- at least as long as 18 years ago with the 2002 EIS -- recognized dam breaching as the best means to save endangered salmon, it has never been selected as the preferred alternative. The federal agencies continue to lose court challenges over the adequacy of the EIS. And they continue to prepare more inadequate EISs. Only to be challenged again.

A difference this time may be that the agencies are putting their erroneous conclusions regarding the negative economic effect of breaching the dams more front and center while acknowledging the "potential major long-term benefits for Snake River salmonids." This is close to an admission that economics takes priority over species extinction.

This makes the fact that breaching the dams would save taxpayers and ratepayers money all the more sad and ironic. Jim Waddell, founder and chair of Dam Sense, also a Washington State Utility Commissioner and retired from the Corps of Engineers, has studied this issue closely for over 10 years. Mr. Waddell, speaking in his own capacity and not on behalf of the PUD, commented: "Keeping the aging dams is a financial cliff for BPA. Ratepayers will end up absorbing the cost just as taxpayers have absorbed the cost of maintaining the dams through significant federal subsidies."

"People need to think critically about this issue and question what they are hearing from pro-dam supporters. The EIS is certainly not the final word. The Corps can still respond to political and public pressure by placing the dams in non-operational status and starting to breach them this year," said Waddell.

Dam Sense 501(c)(3) is a coalition of diverse interests, dedicated to communicating the ecological, cultural, and economic benefits of a free-flowing Snake River, as well as technical and scientific knowledge about dam breaching. Visit www.damsense.org for more information.

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